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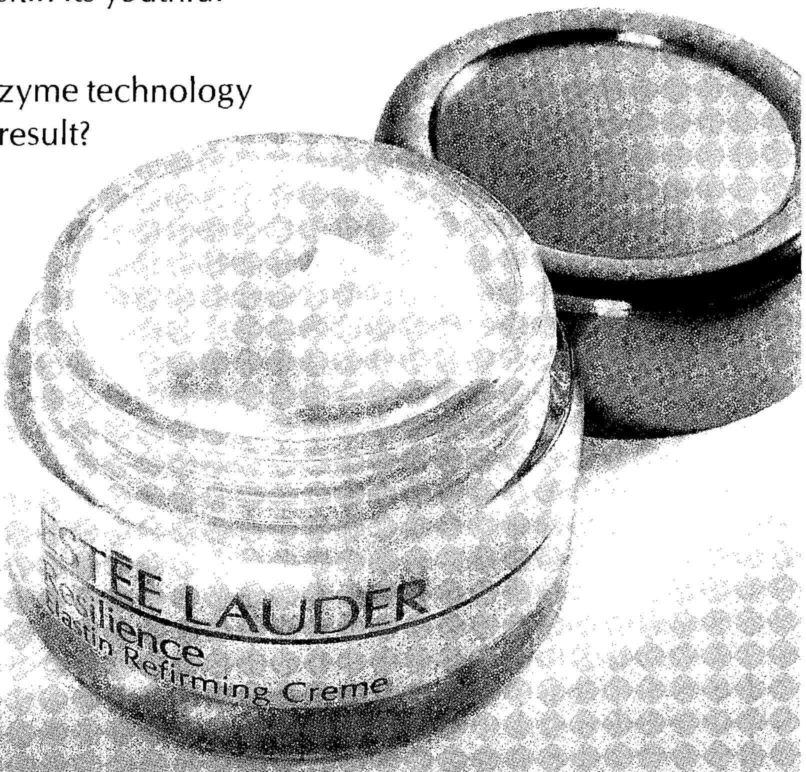

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FEBRUARY 14, 1994

COMMENT Park Prospects 6
There are ways that the city can save trees and money, too.

IN THE MAIL 10

GOINGS ON ABOUT TOWN 12

THE TALK OF THE TOWN 35
Bruce Nauman's anniversary, Marilyn Horne's birthday, etc.

DEPARTMENTS

Annals of Comedy It's Albert . . . . *Alison Rose* 40
Everyone from Johnny Carson to Steve Martin thinks that Albert Brooks is the funniest guy in the business. So why isn't he a star?

Letter from Liverpool Children of Circumstance . . . . *Blake Morrison* 48
Now that sentence has been passed on two boys who killed a toddler, an anguished city is left to confront the implications of the crime.

Annals of Communications Promise Her the Moon . . . . *Ken Auletta* 61
With the television networks clamoring for big-name value, Diane Sawyer is in the midst of the latest bidding war.

PROFILE The Exile Returns . . . . *David Remnick* 64
The Soviets banished Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, and the West often preferred to ignore his uncompromising vision. After devoting twenty years to his historical masterwork, the author is now going home to look for a role in the new Russia.

FAMILY ALBUM Helen Hokinson . . . . *Richard Merkin* 84

FICTION "Bad Boy Walking" . . . . *Emily Carter* 86

THE CRITICS

On Television Richard Ben Cramer's "Tabloid Truth" . . . . *James Wolcott* 92
The Current Cinema Michael Apted's "Blink" . . . . *Anthony Lane* 95
Books Carolyn Chute's "Merry Men" . . . . *Anna Shapiro* 97
Briefly Noted 101

POEMS

"Traveller" . . . . *Edward Hirsch* 68
"Free Nail Polish" . . . . *John Ashbery* 88

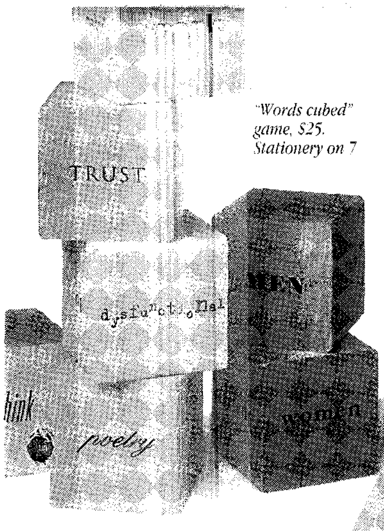
SHOUTS AND MURMURS Out of Style . . . . *Calvin Trillin* 102

COVER *Funny Valentine, by Mariscal*

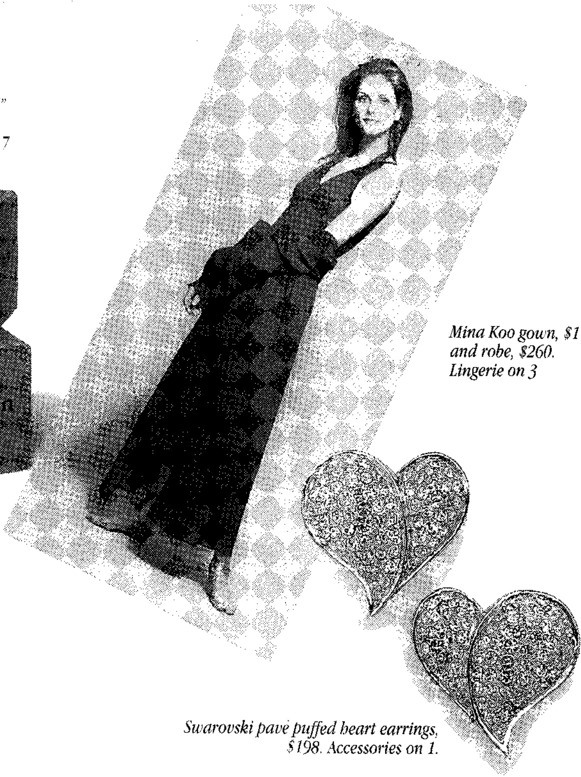
DRAWINGS *Robert Mankoff, David Goldin, Edward Frascino, Henry Martin, Bruce Eric Kaplan, William Hamilton, Frank Modell, Justin Green, Leo Cullum, Edward Koren, Danny Shanahan, Michael Crawford, Lee Lorenz, Warren Miller, John O'Brien, Eldon Dedini, Charles Barsotti, Edward Sorel*

THE NEW YORKER (ISSN 0028-792X), published weekly (except for two combined issues: the last week of December and the first week of January, and the last two weeks of August) by The New Yorker Magazine, Inc., 20 W. 43rd St., N.Y., N.Y. 10036. Vol. LXIX, No. 50, February 14, 1994. Second-class postage paid at New York, N.Y., and at additional mailing offices. Authorized as second-class mail by the Post Office Department, Ottawa, Canada, and for payment of postage in cash. Canadian Publication Mail Sales Product Agreement No.190969. Canadian goods-and-services-tax registration number R123242885. Registered as a newspaper at the British Post Office. Subscription rates: In U.S. and possessions, one year, $32.00; two years, $52.00. In Canada, one year, $65.27 (includes G.S.T.). Other foreign, one year, $76.00, payable in advance.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to The New Yorker, Box 56447, Boulder, Colorado 80322. PRINTED IN U.S.A.



"Words cubed" game, $25. Stationery on 7

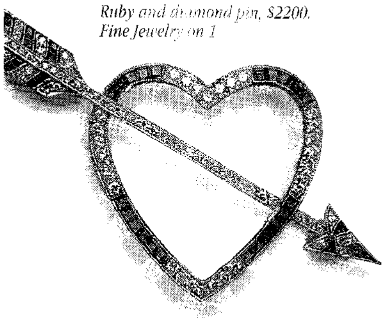


Mina Koo gown, $110, and robe, $260. Lingerie on 3

Swarovski pavé puffed heart earrings, $198. Accessories on 1.

Swarovski crystal heart necklace, $365. Accessories on 1

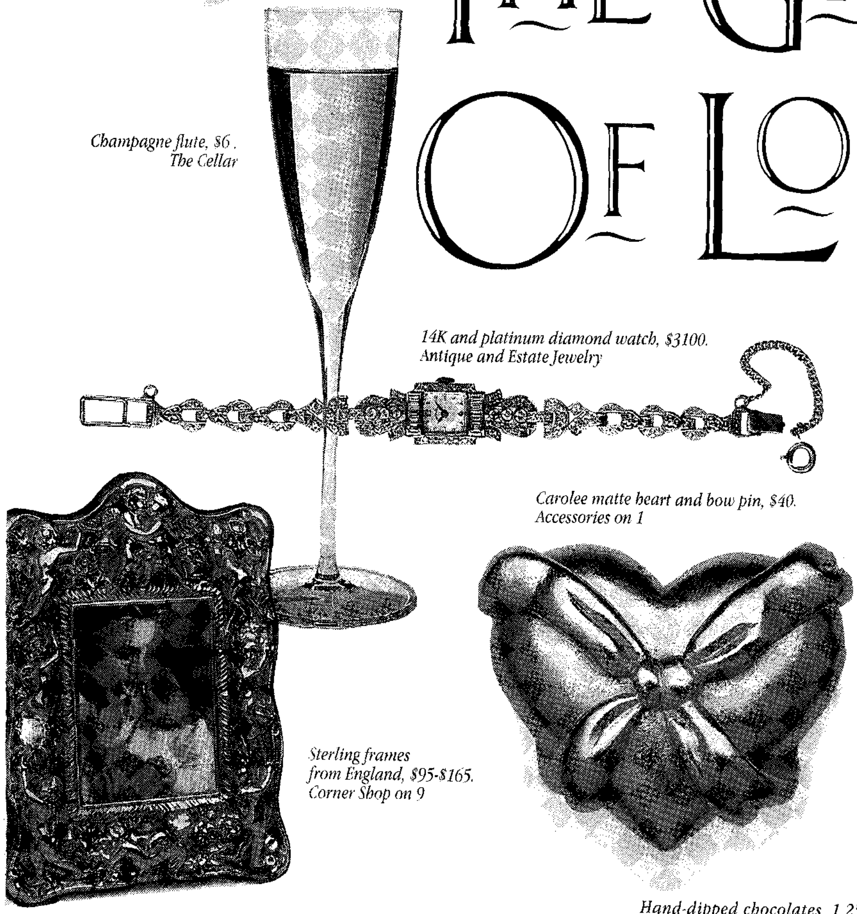
Escada for Women fragrance, $35-$275. On 1



Ruby and diamond pin, $2200. Fine Jewelry on 1

THE GIFTS OF LOVE

Dolce & Gabbana tie, 67.50. Men's on 1

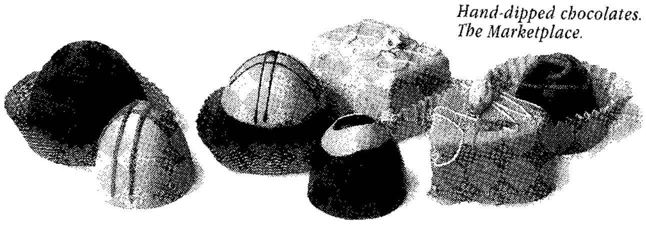


Champagne flute, $6. The Cellar

14K and platinum diamond watch, $3100. Antique and Estate Jewelry

Carolee matte heart and bow pin, $40. Accessories on 1

Sterling frames from England, $95-$165. Corner Shop on 9



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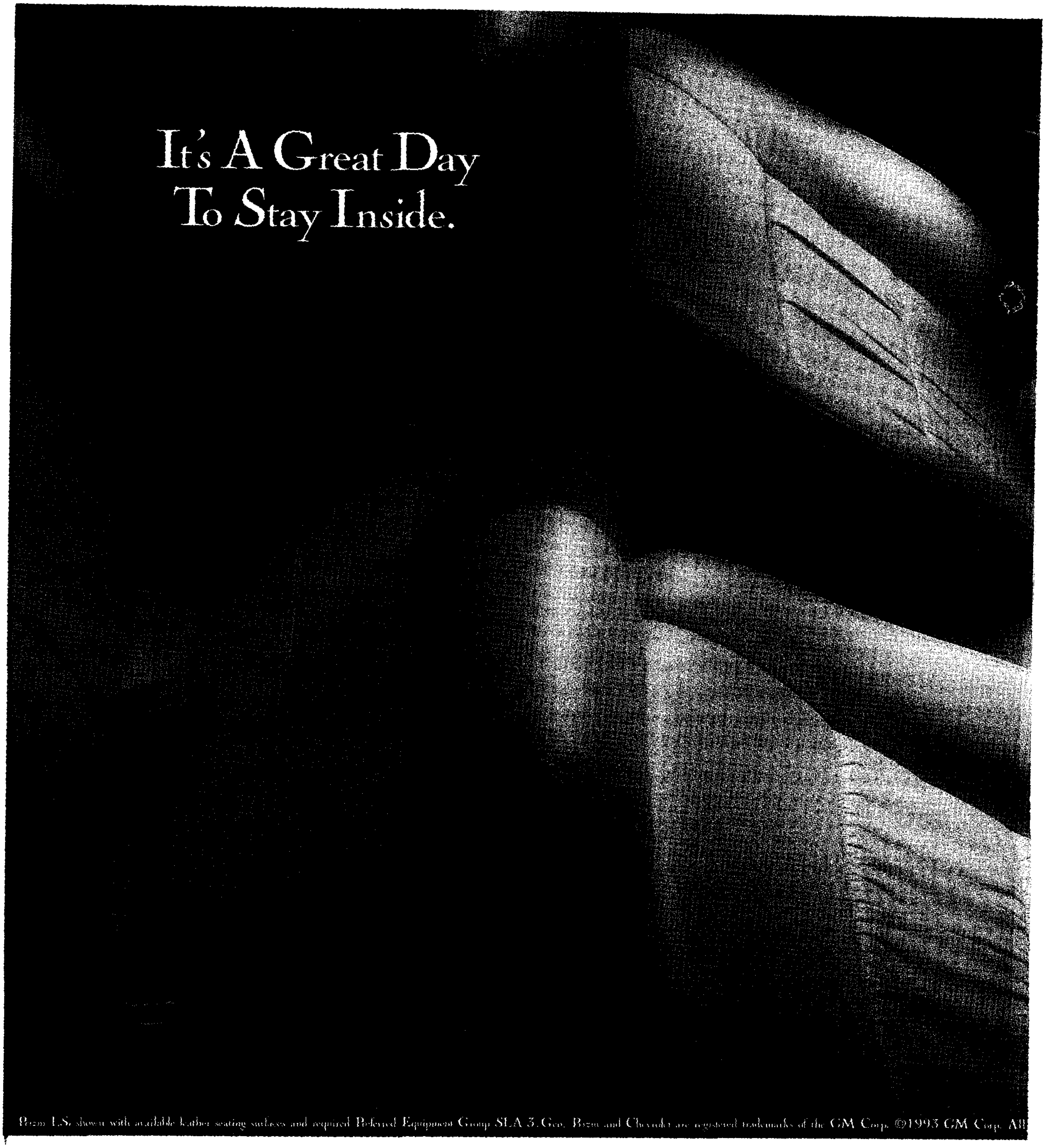

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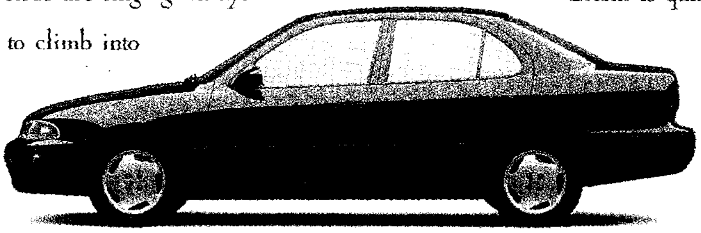

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COMMENT

PARK PROSPECTS

HENRY STERN, who until four years ago was Mayor Koch's Parks Commissioner and has just been appointed Mayor Giuliani's, has a gooey green mess on his hands. Central Park and a few other blessed success stories aside, the public parks of New York City have never been so filthy, so overgrown, so broken down, and so dangerous. The Department of Parks and Recreation was cut back devastatingly under the Dinkins administration. So Mr. Stern comes back to just over three thousand full-time employees; he had forty-five hundred before. That's fifteen hundred tree pruners, bench repairers, gardeners, graffiti removers, rangers on horseback, recreation directors, trash collectors, and comfort-station cleaners who aren't out there anymore to help keep the city's parklands—twenty-six thousand acres, the equivalent of thirty-one Central Parks—alive. The whole town has seen and hated the consequences: syringes in sandboxes, shattered lampposts, splintered benches, overgrown paths, deeply eroded hillsides, dead tree branches hovering ominously over playgrounds, four-letter words scrawled on seesaws, drug dealers quarrelling in what's supposed to be a basketball court, every kind of garbage, from used condoms to abandoned automobiles, all over the place, and people using bushes and tree trunks as toilets in full daylight.

And it will only get worse. The new Mayor's preliminary budget plan, announced last week, calls for cutting two hundred and fifty-five more Parks and Recreation jobs by mid-1995. There's no money in the budget for new parks, and people everywhere are trying to grab land from old parks for non-green purposes—a firing range in Pelham Bay, a tennis stadium in Flushing Meadow, a garage for a hospital in Cobble Hill. New York still has three-quarters of a million street trees—our own urban forest, which is melting away faster than the Amazon rain forest. Every year, the city plants eight thousand street trees; every year, at least fifteen thousand die. Scores of once shaded city blocks are stripped back to nothing more than concrete, asphalt, and stumps. (Imagine the glare, the wind, and the blankness along West Eighty-first Street, next to the Planetarium, if it were to lose its majestic

THE NEW YORKER, 20 WEST 43RD STREET, NEW YORK, N.Y. 10036. Steven T. Florio, president and chief executive officer; Thomas A. Florio, vice-president and publisher; Ruth A. Diem, vice-president and human-resources director; Matthew D. Roberts, vice-president and marketing director; Pamela H. Older, vice-president and director of manufacturing; Peter Armour, vice-president and circulation director; Pamela Maffei McCarthy, vice-president and managing editor; Rhonda Pinzer Sherman, vice-president and director of promotion; Gary Van Dis, vice-president and corporate creative director; Maurie Perl, vice-president and director of public relations. Branch advertising offices: 111 East Wacker Drive, Chicago, Ill. 60601; 41 Osgood Place, San Francisco, Calif. 94133; 5900 Wilshire Blvd., Suite 1460, Los Angeles, Calif. 90036; Manager Media International, Ltd., 37 New Bond St., London W1Y 9HB, England; Penn Brown & Associates, 20 Park Plaza, Suite 446, Boston, Mass. 02116; The Media Company: 3525 Piedmont Road, N.E., Building 5-Suite 440, Atlanta, Ga. 30305; MPR: 2500 So. Dixie Highway, Miami, Fla. 33133; 3016 Mason Place, Tampa, Fla. 33629; 3 Church St., Suite 503, Toronto, Canada M5E 1M2; Carol Orr & Co., 3500 Maple Ave., Suite 1060, Dallas, Tx. 75219; Catherine Billups & Co., Via Pinamonte Da Vimercate, No. 6, 20121 Milan, Italy. Steve Leece Media Ltd., Shun Pont Commercial Building, 5-11 Thomson Road, #12-B, Wanchai, Hong Kong. SLDM Pte. Ltd., 7500-A Beach Road, #06-323 The Plaza, 0719 Singapore, Republic of Singapore. THE NEW YORKER is not responsible for the return or loss of submissions, or for any damage or other injury to unsolicited manuscripts or artwork. Any submission of a manuscript or artwork must be accompanied by a self-addressed envelope of appropriate size, bearing adequate return postage. The magazine does not consider unsolicited photographs or transparencies. SUBSCRIPTION SERVICE: To inquire about a subscription or to change an address, please write to THE NEW YORKER, Box 56447, Boulder, Colorado 80322, or telephone 1 800 825-2510. For a change of address, subscribers should give four weeks notice. If possible, please send the address label from a recent issue. © 1994 by *The New Yorker* Magazine, Inc. All rights reserved. No part of this periodical may be reproduced without the consent of THE NEW YORKER. The periodical's name and logo, and the various titles and headings herein, are registered trademarks of Advance Magazine Publishers, Inc., published through its division *The New Yorker* Magazine, Inc.

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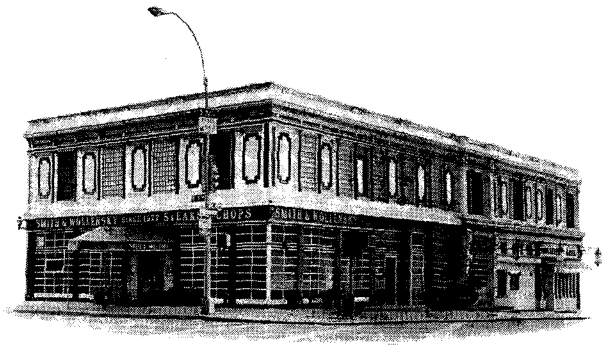
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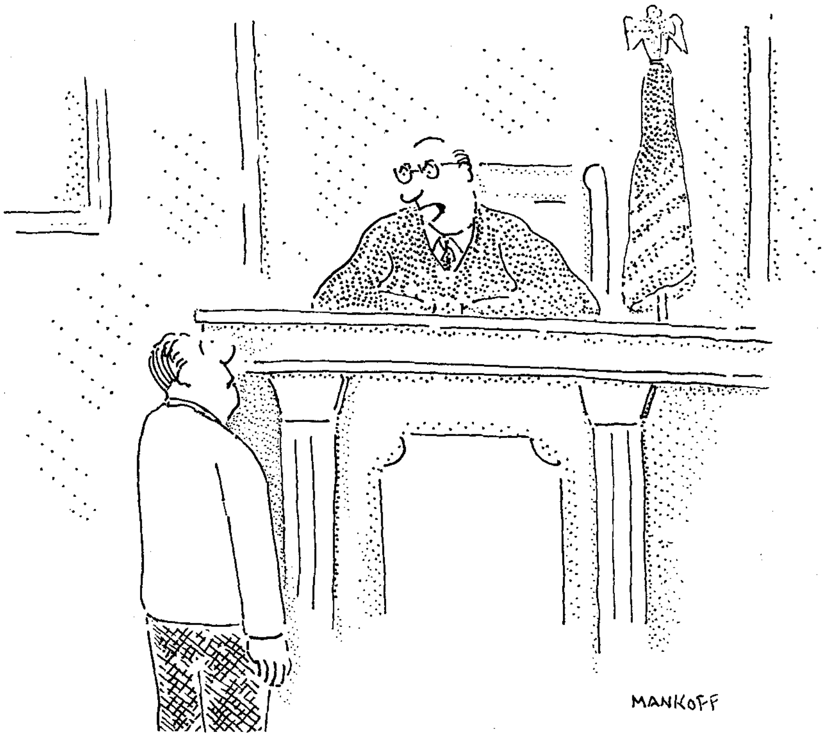

"I don't care how many chances the Buffalo Bills got—you're through!"

• •

double row of sycamores.) At this rate, most of today's schoolkids will be around to mourn the city's last street tree.

It's as if the plug were slowly being pulled on the whole long parks experiment that began in 1858, with the building of Central Park. But writing off parks as an unaffordable élitist frill would be a hideous, city-killing mistake. It would also be a political mistake of the first magnitude: a new poll by Louis Harris shows that ninety-five per cent of New Yorkers believe that parks are important to their lives—and rarely does any poll question about anything get a response in the nineties. There is an alternative to the decline, if Commissioner Stern and his boss are willing to fight for the idea that parks are as essential as cops and schools.

Six years ago, Bryant Park, right behind the New York Public Library, on Forty-second Street, was shut down for renovation. By that time, the park had grown so dangerous that a woman was murdered on its steps. Last year, after a glistening, nine-million-dollar, five-year overhaul by the Bryant Park Restoration Corporation, it reopened. Now it's safe, as beautiful as a Seurat, and lovingly used. And, perhaps more to the point in this hard-headed city and this hard-hearted time, rents for offices that look out over Bryant Park have gone up as much as forty per cent. (That's something we have reason to know.)

New York first saw this caterpillar-cocoon-butterfly type of metamorphosis more than a century ago: In 1875, Frederick Law Olmsted, the father of Central Park, showed that in the seventeen years it took to build Central Park real-estate prices around it multiplied nine times, while land farther from the park only doubled in price. It's also been found that when you plant street trees on any block in a city, even in the most degraded neighborhoods, the price of a house or an apartment on that block jumps significantly. Parks and trees are green in more ways than one.

Rescuing natural areas can pay off, too. The old streams of southern Staten Island, for instance, are saving the city hundreds of millions of dollars because they can handle rainwater so efficiently that there's no need to build dozens of concrete storm sewers. And the streams give their part of Staten Island a series of sparkling parks, practically free. The New York region, still deeply trapped in recession, has lost a million jobs in the last four years. We've got to keep jobs here, and we've got to bring in new ones. Lush, green, beautiful parks are one way to invite people to live and work—not to mention visit—here. John Dyson, the new deputy mayor for economic development, has proposed lavishing money on the Metropolitan Museum of Art, in the hope of bringing in more tourists. What about resuscitating a world-famous tourist attraction like Washington Square Park, alias Drugs R Us?

For New York neighborhoods desperately staving off collapse and abandonment, creating parks can be a salvation: clearing and planting a vacant lot lets a community prove to itself that when people work together they can breathe life and safety back into a place. New York's community gardeners have saved a thousand vacant lots from desolation.

Parks and Recreation may not have the money that parks need, but other city departments do. Environmental Protection, for example, which is planning to build a sludge plant on a large slice of northern Staten Island, is spending just a little more money so that a hundred acres of leftover land can become a nature preserve. And General Services has three-quarters of a million dollars to spend on greening up vacant lots that won't be built on for years, so it can renovate places like Red Hook and the South Bronx right away.

What about private donations, and state money, too? Central Park has about the same number of people taking care of it that it had twenty years ago. Back then, they were all city employees, but now half of them get paid out of six million dollars kicked in every year by private donors. And Riverbank, New York's most popular, stunning new park, on the rooftop of a Harlem sewage plant, is paid for by the state. Public Space for Public Life, a new nonprofit group, has a hot-off-the-presses list of brand-new state and federal money sources that city parks can tap into—money for protecting the environment and building highways.

All this piggybacking of programs is essential, and must be the way we do things—so that every time we get better sewage treatment we're guaranteed more parks, and any new road will automatically bring with it a new greenway. There's a policy in there struggling to get out, and it needs leaders who won't allow themselves to say "We're broke" or "It can't be done." Mayor Giuliani, you're elected. Commissioner Stern, you're appointed. ♦

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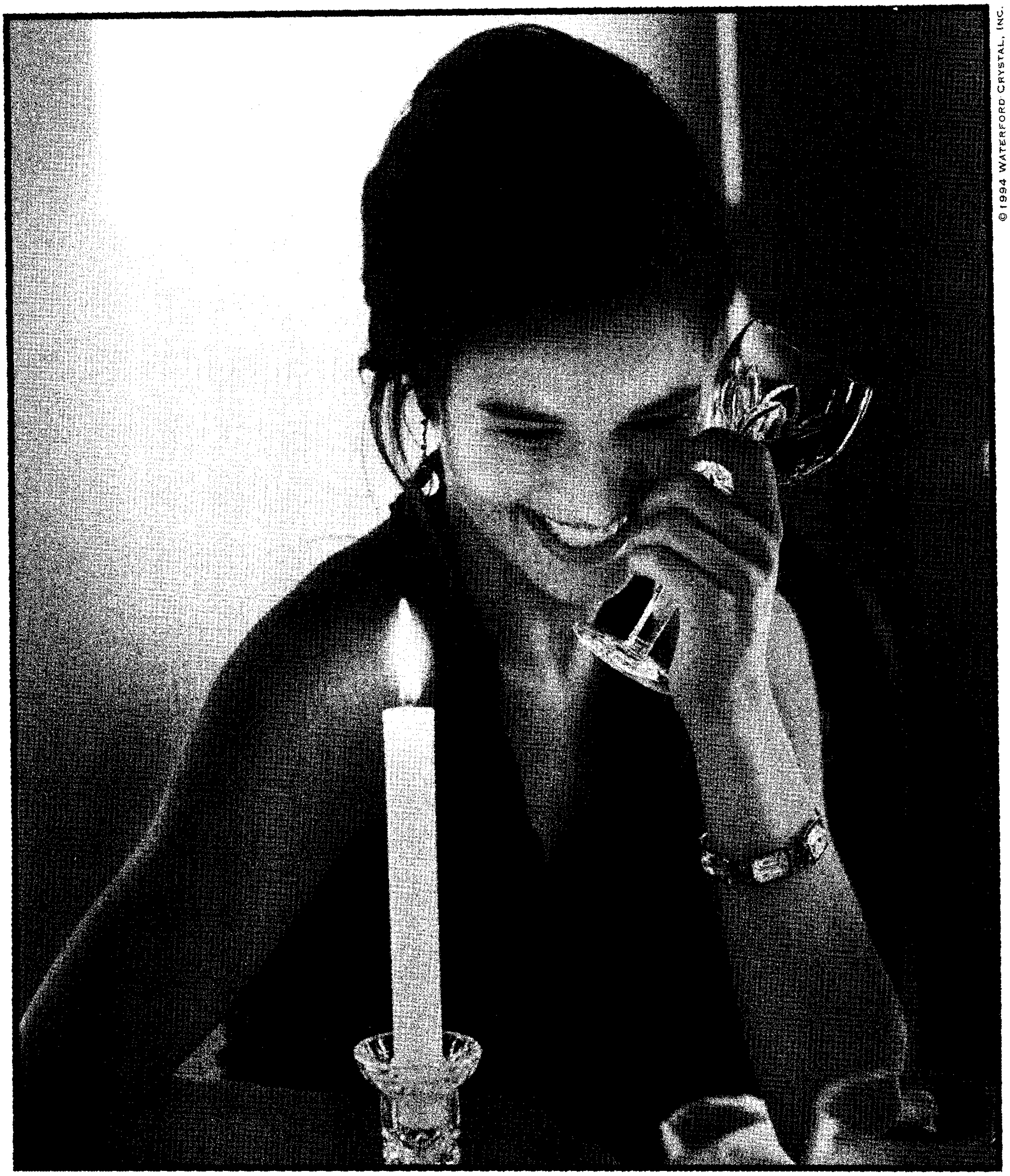

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IN THE MAIL

TEMPLE GRANDIN

Oliver Sacks' piece on Temple Grandin, "A Neurologist's Notebook: An Anthropologist on Mars" (December 27th / January 3rd), was particularly moving for me. I am the mother of two wonderful boys, one of whom has autism and is considered high-functioning. I read an article by Ms. Grandin shortly after our son's autism was diagnosed, two years ago. In it she referred to herself as a recovering autistic person, and that phrase gave me hope—not that autism would go away but that our son could learn ways to cope with the world and to benefit from the gifts of autism. He is now in a mainstream kindergarten program, where he learns both the social lessons his classmates intrinsically know and the academic lessons all children learn as kindergartners. Like many people with autism in their families, we have had our share of painful experiences. At such times, it is helpful to remember Temple Grandin.

KAREN CLARK
Portland, Ore.

In his article about Temple Grandin, Dr. Sacks mentions Uta Frith's theory that persons with autism and Asperger's syndrome lack a "theory of mind" and have an "empathy disorder." As the father of an autistic son, I know that the failure to grasp nuances of feeling in social relationships is only one aspect of a more pervasive disorder in cognitive processing which has not yet been defined by neuroscience. (In fact, the World Health Organization's International Classification of Diseases lists autism under "mental disorders.") It is important to note that most people with autism—probably more than ninety per cent—are profoundly disabled and are not capable of independent living. The needs of most children and adolescents with autism are met by parents in a daily struggle that nearly defies description.

RONALD J. KALLEN, M.D.
Park Ridge, Ill.

Oliver Sacks' portrayal of Temple Grandin abounds with her humanity, empathy, and emotion, and also her profound lack of understanding of how all that is communicated between individuals. Contrary to her suggestion that she is missing some emotional wiring, her whole existence seems geared toward addressing the emotional connection she feels with animals and with the people whose job it is to slaughter them. Ms. Grandin's wish for connection, if only through writing, speaks to a lack of knowledge, not a lack of emotion or empathy. It is of great concern to me, as a therapist, that her isolation is presented as a biological given; our knowledge of cognitive psychology, in general, and of autism, in particular, is far from the level of sophistication necessary to make such a pronouncement. We simply do not know which behaviors or deficits are due to neurological changes and which are the results of coping with autism. Dr. Sacks writes that Ms. Grandin continues to make gains in her ability to relate to other people; one wonders how much greater these gains might be without the accompanying conviction that they are made against biological odds.

DIANE E. BAKER
Syracuse, N.Y.

How many *ordinary* people are on intimate terms with the core of their beings? Yet Temple Grandin, who sometimes states that she feels little emotion, breaks down in tears while speaking about God and destiny and meaning—subjects that many ordinary people are too hip to take seriously. It's ironic that for ordinary people the spiritual quest involves trying to overcome the emotions that lead to selfish traits such as jealousy, greed, and duplicity, while Ms. Grandin seems never to have been "infected" by these traits and instead experiences, at least sometimes, all the best emotions. Maybe it says as much about our shortcomings as about hers that she is better able to share those emotions with animals than with us.

JOHN W. WALL
San Francisco, Calif.

When Temple Grandin claims she "does not have an unconscious" and "does not repress memories and thoughts," I wondered whether she has the ability to dream. We have been taught that during REM sleep the unconscious mind processes our repressed thoughts and feelings, transforming them into conscionable concepts; supposedly, without this ability normal people would be unable to function. Does Ms. Grandin dream? Or is she able to, in her words, "intellectually understand" dreaming and intellectually compensate for her lack of this ability?

MICHAEL B. HARRNACKER
Buffalo, N.Y.

Oliver Sacks replies:

Temple tells me that she does dream, and she describes her dream images as very concrete, explicit, and in full color—like her waking images—and (seemingly) without the distortions, conflations, displacements, camouflages, and latent content that normally go with dreaming. But dream reports are so untrustworthy; it certainly seems to me a subject worth investigating.

Letters should be as brief as possible, and sent with the writer's name, address, and daytime phone number to "In the Mail," The New Yorker, 20 West 43rd Street, New York, N.Y. 10036. They may be edited for length and clarity.

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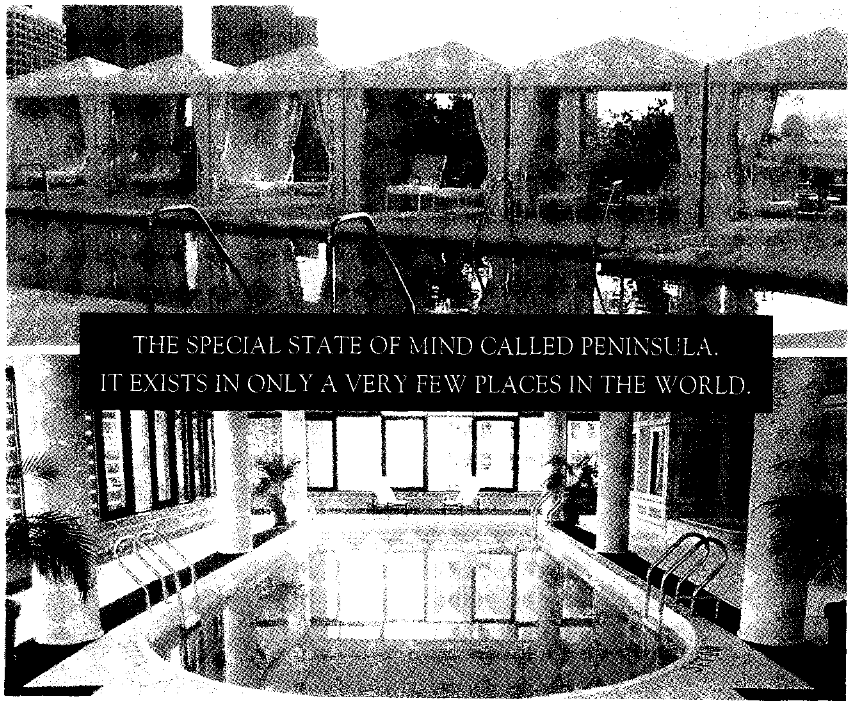
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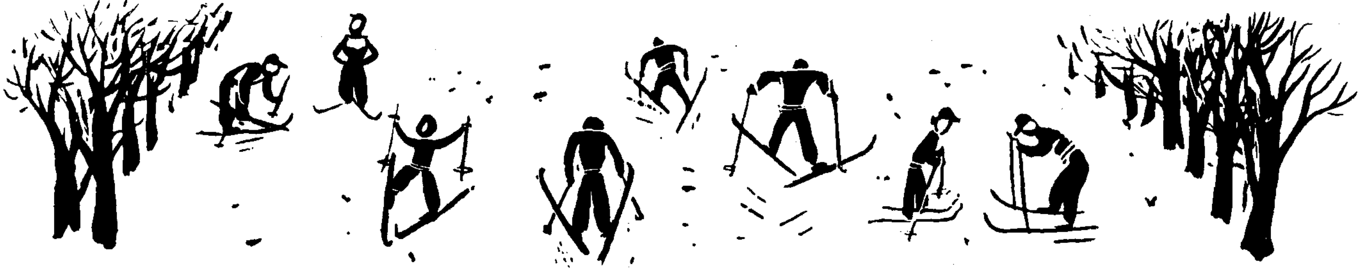


THE THEATRE

Coming Up Moses

ACTING is an art of waiting—for an actor to pick up a cue, for the crew to set up a shot, and, perhaps most of all, for the right role to come along. The actor and singer Burke Moses has waited thirteen years for his dream assignment, the pumped-up, ridiculously conceited Gaston in the Broadway-bound Disney juggernaut "Beauty and the Beast," and he's already wondering whether a comparably plummy part will ever land on his plate again. "Acting is like golf," the playful actor said recently. "Even when you win, you don't really win. You just hope you keep on having good rounds."

"Beauty" kept Moses busy last year through six months of rehearsals and a six-week tuneup in Houston. While waiting for rehearsals to recommence (the show opens here in April), the brown-haired, brown-eyed Mr. Moses has had a chance to glance back at his beginnings. "At age twenty-one," he says, "I found myself onstage at the Minskoff Theatre, auditioning for 'West Side Story.'" He didn't land a role—a baritone, he couldn't quite scale "Maria"—but it was his first contact with the kind of quintessential guy parts he later won: Stanley in "Streetcar," Billy in "Carousel," and, on Broadway, Sky Masterson in "Guys and Dolls." Only his intimates, however, may be fully prepared for the hormonal roar of Mr. Moses as Gaston. Now all he has to wait for is the reviews.

OPENINGS AND PREVIEWS

(Please call the phone number listed with the theatre for timetables and ticket information.)

The Au Pair Man—Hugh Leonard's recently updated version of his 1968 play, presented by the Irish Repertory Theatre. Preview on Feb. 9. Opens Feb. 10 at 8 and runs through March 6. (28th Street Theatre, 120 W. 28th St. 279-4200.)

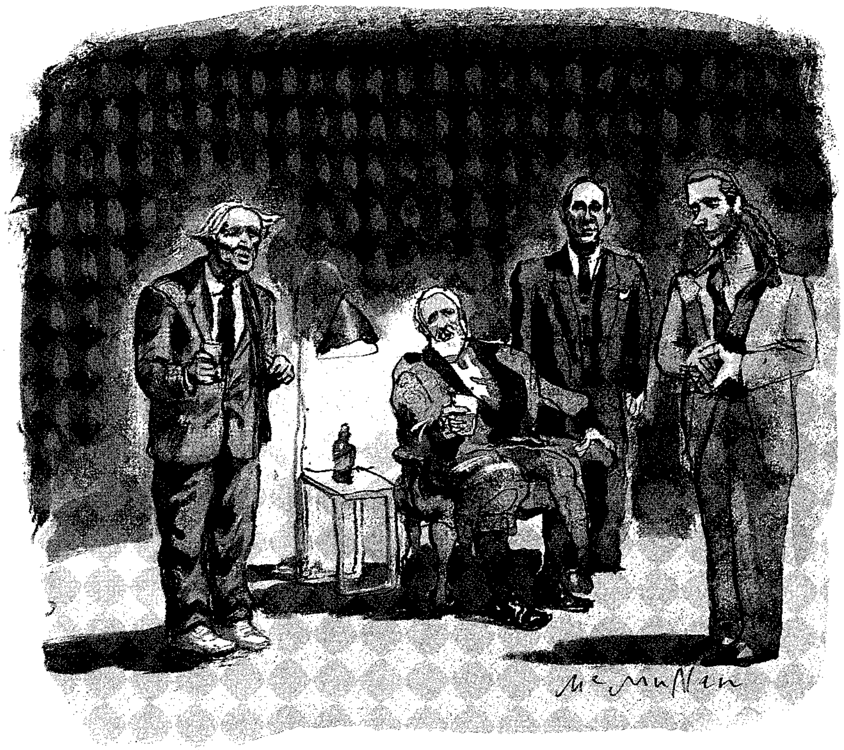
Avenue X—An a-cappella musical set in Brooklyn in 1963, by John Jiler and Ray Leslee. In previews. (Playwrights Horizons, 416 W. 42nd St. 279-4200.)

Circle Repertory Company—Performances of Jenna Zark's play "A Body of Water" (opening officially on Feb. 9 at 8) alternate with those of Regina Taylor's one-woman show "Escape from Paradise" (in previews). (99 Seventh Ave. S. 924-7100.)

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
			9	10	11	12
13	14	15				

Damn Yankees—Victor Garber and Bebe Neuwirth star in the first Broadway revival of the 1955 musical by George Abbott and Douglass Wallop (book) and Richard Adler and Jerry Ross (score and lyrics). Previews begin Feb. 14. (Marquis, Broadway at 45th St. 307-4100.)

Fiorello!—A concert version of the 1959 musical about Mayor Fiorello LaGuardia by Jerry Bock, Sheldon Harnick, Jerome Weidman, and George Abbott. With Jerry Zaks, Faith Prince, Donna McKechnie, and Philip Bosco. Walter Bobbie directed. (City Center, 131 W. 55th St. 581-1212. Feb. 9-12 at 8.)



Christopher Plummer, Jason Robards, John Seitz, and Tom Wood in Harold Pinter's "No Man's Land."

JAMES McMULLAN

Little Eyolf—An 1894 play by Ibsen, with Joanne Camp and Mark Kenneth Smaltz. Previews through Feb. 12. Opens Feb. 13 at 2. (Pearl, 125 W. 22nd St. 645-7708.)

Three Tall Women—A 1991 play by Edward Albee, with Marian Seldes, Jordan Baker, and Myra Carter. Previews through Feb. 12 (matinée). Opens Feb. 13 at 7:30. (Vineyard Theatre, 108 E. 15th St. 353-3874.)

Unfinished Stories—A play by Sybille Pearson. In previews. (New York Theatre Workshop, 79 E. 4th St. 302-6989.)

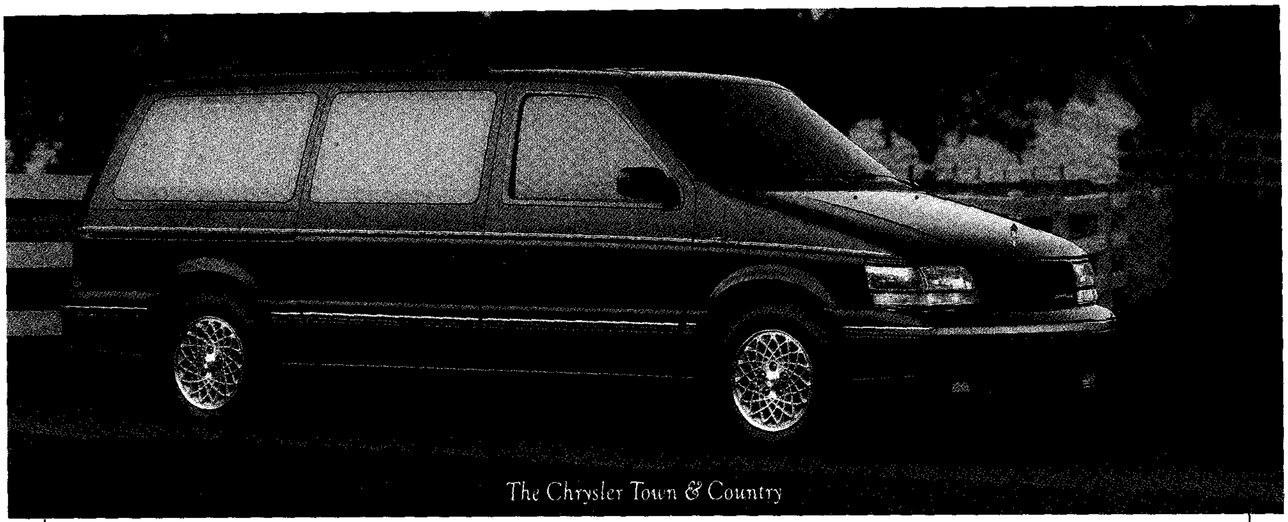
OPENED RECENTLY

All in the Timing—Six sparkling one-act comedies by David Ives. (Primary Stages, 354 W. 45th St. 777-7474. Closes here on Feb. 13. Starts Feb. 17 at the John Houseman, 450 W. 42nd St. 239-6200.)

Angels in America—"Perestroika," the second half of Tony Kushner's "Angels in America," is a masterpiece. Epic in scope, superbly acted, and directed with passionate restraint by George C. Wolfe, the play employs an original, impressionistic theatrical vocabulary to show us the heart of a new age. It runs in repertory with the first half, "Millennium Approaches." ("Perestroika" was reviewed in our issue of 12/13/93; "Millennium Approaches," 5/31/93.) (Walter Kerr, 219 W. 48th St. 239-6200.)

As You Like It—David Dossey, Mark Hammer, Arthur French, and Miriam Healy-Louie are the exemplary players in an excellent cast—and it's a good thing, too, because the director, Mark Rylance, has given the play a present-day American setting, and it's a distraction without a payoff. Still, the acting is a pleasure, and the staging offers several marvellous visual jokes and effects. (St. Clement's, 423 W. 46th St. 279-4200. Closes Feb. 19.)

Blown Sideways Through Life—In her sixty-fifth job, Claudia Shear charmingly and observantly tells us about her previous sixty-four, which have ranged from working in a



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It's not surprising that people have been trading in cars for the Town & Country minivan. What's surprising is which cars.

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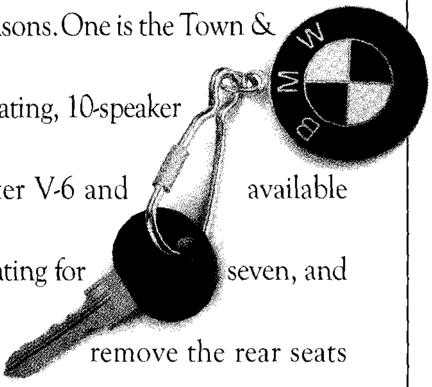

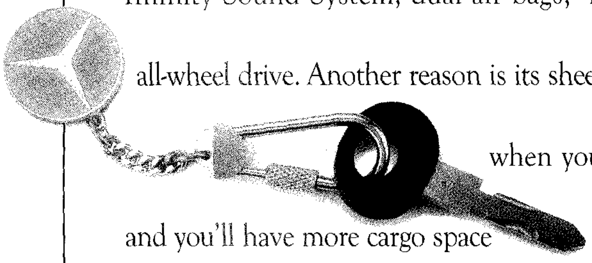

But perhaps the most important reason people accustomed to great cars enjoy the Town & Country is because it handles like a great car itself. One test drive and even the most discerning luxury car owners realize they don't have to compromise anything to own a vehicle that's stunningly practical. Least of all, their standards.

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THE THEATRE–Cont'd

hardware store to being a "phone girl" at a whorehouse, with a stint as a Bloomingdale's cosmetics salesgirl thrown in. (Cherry Lane, 38 Commerce St. 989-2285.)

Booth—Austin Pendleton's ambitious first play is an often witty historical drama about the thespian and Oedipal rivalry between the nineteenth-century Shakespearean actor Junius Brutus Booth and his son Edwin Booth. (Edwin's brother John Wilkes is a minor character.) Frank Langella and Garret Dillahunt are riveting as Junius and Edwin. Directed by David Schweizer and presented by the York Theatre Company. (St. Peter's Church, Lexington Ave. at 54th St. 534-5366. Closes Feb. 13.)

Cyrano: The Musical—The nose have it. (Neil Simon, 250 W. 52nd St. 307-4100.)

Day Standing on Its Head—A middle-aged law professor of Hawaiian and Japanese extraction, who turned conservative after falling out with the Asian-American student movement at the end of the sixties, has lost his way: his wife no longer loves him, and his students think he's irrelevant. What keeps Philip Kan Gotanda's play from being a predictable midlife-crisis drama is the unflaggingly clever direction of Oskar Eustis. With Keone Young as the professor. Kati Kuroda is wonderful as the professor's mother. (Manhattan Theatre Club, at City Center, 131 W. 55th St. 581-1212. Closes Feb. 13.)

Death and the Maiden—The Puerto Rican Traveling Theatre performs Ariel Dorfman's play, in English (three times a week) and Spanish (four times a week). (304 W. 47th St. 354-1293.)

East Texas Hot Links—The "hot links" of Eugene Lee's play, set in 1955 in a bar deep in the piney woods of East Texas, refer not only to spicy country sausages (and to something lewd) but also to the highly charged connections between the seven black men who frequent the bar and the woman who owns it. Mr. Lee, who is also an actor, has certainly written some good lines for his cast, but several characters seem pulled out of a bag of stereotypes, and while the play is shocking, it never surprises. Directed by Marion McClinton. (Public, 425 Lafayette St. 598-7150. Closes Feb. 13.)

Family Secrets—Sherry Glaser is the sole, physically adept, very funny performer in this comedy about a Jewish family, which she wrote with Greg Howells. (Westside Theatre, 407 W. 43rd St. 307-4100.)

Four Dogs and a Bone—The "bone" of John Patrick Shanley's satiric comedy is a movie, and the "four dogs" are its producer, writer, and two actresses, who together make the funniest foursome in town. (11/15/93) (Lucille Lortel, 121 Christopher St. 924-8782.)

Hello Again—A new musical by Michael John LaChiusa, loosely based on Arthur Schnitzler's play "La Ronde." With Judy Blazer, John Dossett, John Cameron Mitchell, and Donna Murphy. (Mitzi E. Newhouse, Lincoln Center. 239-6200.)

Howard Crabtree's Whoop-Dee-Doo!—A witty and topical musical revue. (Actors' Playhouse, 100 Seventh Ave. S. 777-7474. Closes Feb. 20.)

The Illusion—Tony Kushner's version of Corneille's "L'Illusion Comique." (Classic Stage Company, 136 E. 13th St. 677-4210. Closes Feb. 13.)

In Bed with the Blues: The Adventures of Fishy Waters—A play written by and starring Guy Davis. (Henry Street Settlement, 466 Grand St. 576-9028. Closes Feb. 13.)

Irene Worth's Portrait of Edith Wharton—Miss Worth, looking sleek and elegant in a Fortuny gown, gives a reading of passages drawn from Wharton's memoir, "A Backward Glance," and from her other writings, and explores the eventful inner and outer life of this year's literary It girl. Miss Worth's intonations have an air of self-satisfaction that doesn't seem true to Wharton, but the evening has its moments, such as her impersonation of Henry James asking for directions on a motoring trip and taking forever about it. (Public, 425 Lafayette St. 598-7150. Closes Feb. 27.)

Meat Loaf at Madison Square Garden.

AHMET GÖRGÜN

Jean Cocteau Repertory—Performances of Shaw's "Heartbreak House" alternate with David Fishelson's dramatization of Dostoyevski's "The Brothers Karamazov." (Bouwerie Lane Theatre, 330 Bowery, at Bond St. 677-0060.)

Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat—Like a kaleidoscope, Andrew Lloyd Webber's flippant new mega-version of his first musical is bright, ever-changing, and utterly meaningless. As Joseph, Michael Damian is physically nimble and vocally wan. Everyone else conspires to wring an ovation out of the overstimulated audience. (Minskoff, 45th St. west of Broadway. 307-4100.)

Kiss of the Spider Woman—A musical, based on the novel by Manuel Puig, with a distinguished book by Terrence McNally and a star performance by the redoubtable Chita Rivera in the title role. Harold Prince was the director. The songs are by John Kander and Fred Ebb. (5/24/93) (Broadhurst, 235 W. 44th St. 239-6200.)

Laughter on the 23rd Floor—Neil Simon's twenty-seventh Broadway play, about a group of writers for a fictionalized version of "Your Show of Shows," is one of his finest comic efforts. The subject allows Simon to do what he does best: tell jokes about the making of laughs. Directed by Jerry Zaks, with Mark Linn-Baker, Lewis J. Stadlen, Nathan Lane, Ron Orbach, John Slattery, and J. K. Simmons. (12/20/93) (Richard Rodgers, 226 W. 46th St. 307-4100.)

My Fair Lady—Howard Davies' genial new production of the Lerner and Loewe musical. Richard Chamberlain is all charm and suave good looks as Professor Henry Higgins, and Melissa Errico lends a fine voice and an attractive presence to the role of Eliza. With excellent support from Paxton Whitehead, Dolores Sutton, and Julian Holloway. (1/17/94) (Virginia, 245 W. 52nd St. 239-6200.)

My Head Was a Sledgehammer—Richard Foreman's new play, performed by his Ontological-Hysteric Theatre. (St. Mark's In-the-Bouwerie, Second Ave. at 10th St. For reservations, call 533-4650.)

No Man's Land—Christopher Plummer and Jason Robards star in Harold Pinter's 1975 play. (Roundabout, Broadway at 45th St. 869-8400.)

Old New York: False Dawn—The New York Art Theatre Institute's charming version of the first chapter of Edith Wharton's novella "Old New York." (Old Merchant's House Museum, 29 E. 4th St. 226-6211.)

Pounding Nails in the Floor with My Forehead—Eric Bogosian's latest piece. (Minetta Lane Theatre, 18 Minetta Lane, east of Sixth Ave., between W. 3rd and Bleecker Sts. 307-4100.)

Ricky Jay & His 52 Assistants—With a Mephistophelean smoothness, the master sleight-of-hand artist discourses on the history of trickery and performs illusions that will amaze even those who wouldn't normally go out of their way to see card tricks. Under the direction of David Mamet, who is right at home in the slightly sinister and manly world of magic, Mr. Jay makes willing and delighted fools of his audience. (Second Stage, Broadway at 76th St. 239-6200.)

Sand—The Signature Theatre Company presents three Edward Albee plays, directed by Albee himself: "Box" (1968), "The Sandbox" (1960), and "Finding the Sun" (1983). (Kampo Cultural Center, 31 Bond St. 279-4200.)

She Loves Me—The Roundabout's Valentine of a production of the 1963 Bock-Harnick-Masteroff musical. (Brooks Atkinson, 256 W. 47th St. 307-4100.)

Smiling Through—Music of the forties is spotlighted in this show about a music-hall performer, portrayed by Vicki Stuart. Written by Ivan Menchell, Miss Stuart's son. (Theatre Four, 424 W. 55th St. 757-3900.)

Three Birds Alighting on a Field—A play by Timberlake Wertenbaker. Directed by Max Stafford-Clark, of London's Royal Court Theatre, where the work premièred. (Manhattan Theatre Club, at City Center, 131 W. 55th St. 581-1212.)

LONG RUNS

BEAU JEST: Lamb's, 130 W. 44th St. 997-1780. . . . **BLOOD BROTHERS:** Music Box, 239 W. 45th St. 239-6200. . . . **BLUE MAN GROUP/TUBES:** Astor Place Theatre, 434 Lafayette St. 254-4370. . . . **CATS:** Winter Garden, Broadway at 50th St. 239-6200. . . . **CRAZY FOR YOU:** Shubert, 225 W. 44th St. 239-6200. . . . **THE FANTASTICKS:** Sullivan Street Playhouse, 181 Sullivan St., at Bleecker St. 674-3838. . . . **FOREVER PLAID:** Steve McGraw's, 158 W. 72nd St. 595-7400. . . . **GUYS AND DOLLS:** Martin Beck, 302 W. 45th St. 239-6200. . . . **LES MISÉRABLES:** Imperial, 249 W. 45th St. 239-6200. . . . **MISS SAIGON:** Broadway Theatre, Broadway at 53rd St. 239-6200. . . . **NUNSENSE:** Douglas Fairbanks, 432 W. 42nd St. 239-4321. . . . **PERFECT CRIME:** Duffy, 1553 Broadway, at 46th St. 695-3401. . . . **THE PHANTOM OF THE OPERA:** Majestic, 245 W. 44th St. 239-6200. . . . **THE SISTERS ROSENSWEIG:** Ethel Barrymore, 243 W. 47th St. 239-6200. . . . **TONY N' TINA'S WEDDING:** St. John's Church, 81 Christopher St. 279-4200. . . . **THE WHO'S TOMMY:** St. James, 246 W. 44th St. 239-6200.

DANCE

Luxury Import

In her earliest solo roles, the British ballerina Darcey Bussell seemed to many observers to be little more than a dull powerhouse: a pair of high-sweeping legs with pliant feet, and nothing of interest above the navel. But a year after she left the Royal Ballet School, while she was dancing with the Birmingham Royal Ballet, the choreographer Kenneth MacMillan requested her transfer to the Covent Garden troupe, where they spent a year working on his three-act Benjamin Britten ballet, "The Prince of the Pagodas." Today, she has a very open and unflagging energy; it spreads from the center of her body, coördinates upper body with lower, and gives her striking plasticity and contrast. The twenty-four-year-old Bussell, now a principal at the Royal, has become a powerful and radiant dancer, yet her manners are so simple that it is difficult to characterize her. No British ballerina has ever had less Old World aura than this.

And no British dancer has made such inroads into Balanchine terrain: Bussell now dances nine of his roles. Though she is not yet adept in every feature of Balanchine style, she brings to these roles a grand sweep and a simple presentation that honor them—and that they seldom receive anywhere today. Last summer, Bussell gave a much remarked-upon performance in the pas de deux from "Agon" as part of New York City Ballet's "Dinner with Balanchine" programs; this week she returns to the State Theatre, as a guest artist, in the full ballet and in "Symphony in C." And she'll be back in town (with the Royal) in June.

New York City Ballet—Feb. 9 at 8: "Agon," "In the Night," and "Chaconne." . . . ¶ Feb. 10 at 8: "Swan Lake," "A Schubert Sonata" (première), and "Symphony in C." . . . ¶ Feb. 11 at 8: "Coppélia." . . . ¶ Feb. 12 at 2: "Swan Lake," "Pavane," "Herman Schmerman," and "Symphony in C." . . . ¶ Feb. 12 at 8: Divertimento from "Le Baiser de la Fée," "A Schubert Sonata," and "Union Jack." . . . ¶ Feb. 13 at 1: "Coppélia." . . . ¶ Feb. 13 at 7: "Swan Lake," "Ancient Airs and Dances," and "Chaconne." . . . ¶ Feb. 15 at 8: "Swan Lake," "In the Night," and "Cortège Hongrois." (New York State Theatre. 870-5570. Through Feb. 27.)

Nikolais and Murray Louis Dance—Final performances of the engagement. Feb. 9 at 8: "Index," "Horizons," "Alone," and "Four Brubeck Pieces." . . . ¶ Feb. 11-12 at 8 and Feb. 13 at 5: "A Stravinsky Montage," "Tides," "Interims," and "Tent." (Kaye Playhouse, Hunter College, Park Ave. at 68th St. 772-4448.)

Lucinda Childs Dance Company—Feb. 9 and Feb. 12 at 8, and Feb. 13 at 2: "One and One" (New York première), "Concerto," and "Available Light." . . . ¶ Feb. 10-11 at 8 and Feb. 13 at 7:30: "Dance #1," "Rhythm Plus," "Impromptu," and "Concerto." (Joyce Theatre, 175 Eighth Ave., at 19th St. 242-0800.)

Feld Ballets/NY—The opening performance of a five-week engagement: "Common Ground," "Kore," "Asia," and "Doo Dah Day" (première). (Joyce Theatre, 175 Eighth Ave., at 19th St. 242-0800. Feb. 15 at 8. Through March 20.)

NIGHT LIFE

Kissing Cousins

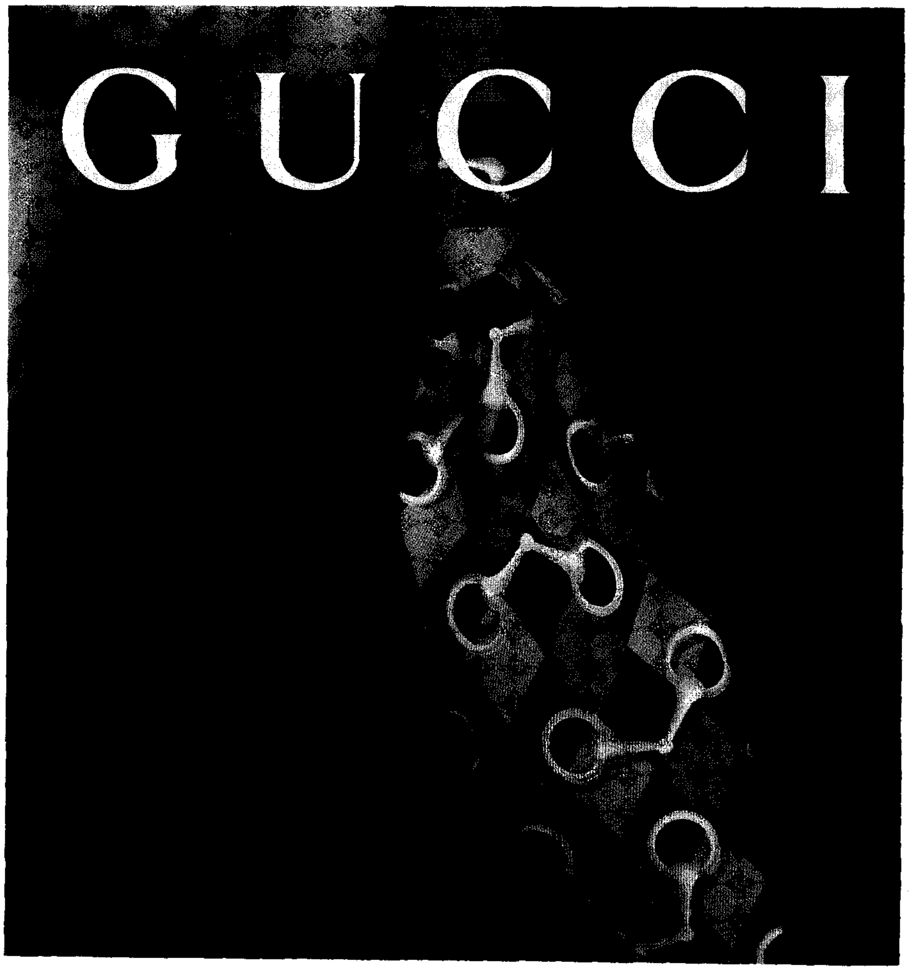
Richard Thompson and Shawn Colvin have played together so often on tours and on club dates that not long ago it was suggested that the two might be lovers. Colvin shot down that rumor last year by marrying Thompson's tour manager, Simon Tassano. Still, given the obvious personal and professional rapport between the two singers, who write intelligent and spirited folk-rock songs, it seems fitting that they should share the bill at the Bottom Line this Valentine's Day.

For Thompson, the gig presents an opportunity to showcase material from his first new album in three years, the just-released "Mirror Blue." Like its predecessor, "Rumor and Sigh," "Blue" is the work of a veteran minstrel in top form. Performing witty jigs and ruefully passionate ballads with equal grace, he offers some of the most sublimely knotty guitar work this side of Mark Knopfler. Perhaps the most remarkable thing about Thompson is his resilience: he's been around steadily since the late sixties, when he helped revolutionize the English folk scene with the group Fairport Convention. In the seventies, he and his wife, Linda Thompson (they have since divorced), made a series of breathtaking confessional albums. Now he has successfully reinvented himself as a solo performer.

Anyone who has caught Thompson live knows that his personality hath charms to rival his music and that his banter between songs is itself worth the price of admission. Colvin, a native of South Dakota who became an adopted New Yorker and wowed downtown club audiences for years before she released her first album, "Steady On," in 1989, has a more restrained stage presence and lets her milk-and-honey soprano do most of the talking. She says to*may*to, he says to*mah*to—we say, go to the Bottom Line and watch the sparks fly.

CONCERTS

Meat Loaf—Perhaps the most telling moment on Meat Loaf's frighteningly successful "Bat Out of Hell II"—the cryogenically unoriginal follow-up to his 1977 multiplatinum opus—comes on a track titled "Everything Louder Than Everything Else," when Loaf bellows this startling summation of his true affinities: "If you want my views of history, then there's something you should know. The three men I admire most are Curly, Larry, and Moe!" Of course, most of the credit for this gargoyle of an album should go to Loaf's once-estranged Caligari, Jim Steinman, who wrote and produced both records. As for Meat Loaf's concert demeanor, all we can say is that for a somnambulist he sure does sweat a lot. (Madison Square Garden. 465-6000. Feb. 9 at 8.)



NIGHT LIFE—Cont'd

Billy Taylor Trio and Milt Jackson—Whether he's playing with the Modern Jazz Quartet or not, Milt Jackson is quite simply the greatest vibraphonist on the planet. With the no-nonsense, mainstream support of pianist Billy Taylor's trio behind him, Jackson will shout the blues, purr ballads, and bop anyone out of business. (Metropolitan Museum, Fifth Ave. at 83rd St. 570-3949. Feb. 10 at 7.)

Billy Stritch—This tuneful Texan captured attention in the early eighties as the bottom third of the vocal trio Montgomery, Plant and Stritch. The group broke up in 1990, but Stritch persevered as a singing pianist and an arranger (most spectacularly for Liza Minnelli). His song "Does He Love You" is contending for a Grammy this year, and he's working on a new solo album. In this show, he'll range through jazz, cabaret, country, and comic numbers, backed up by a trio. (92nd Street Y, Lexington Ave. at 92nd St. 996-1100. Feb. 12 at 7.)

Tibet House Benefit Concert—Edie Brickell, Philip Glass, Allen Ginsberg, Richie Havens, Nawang Khechog, Natalie Merchant, the Roches, Paul Simon, and a group of monks. (Carnegie Hall. 247-7800. Feb. 10 at 7:30.)

Ethnic Heritage Ensemble—Winter Garden, World Financial Center, Battery Park City. Feb. 9 at 6:30. No tickets necessary.

Bobby Short—With the Howard Alden–Dan Barrett quintet, in the "Highlights in Jazz" series' twenty-first-anniversary celebration. (Pace Downtown Theatre, Spruce St. between Nassau and Gold Sts. 346-1715. Feb. 10 at 8.)

Jazz at Lincoln Center—Presenting "Handful of Keys," rare film footage of jazz pianists, including Willie (the Lion) Smith, Earl (Fatha) Hines, and Thelonious Monk. Piano man Roland Hanna is the evening's host. (Walter Reade Theatre, 165 W. 65th St., plaza level. Feb. 10 at 8. For information about tickets, call 875-5050.)

Fred Ho & the Afro-Asian Music Ensemble—Washington Square Church, 135 W. 4th St. Feb. 11 at 8. Tickets at the door on the night of the concert.

UB40—Paramount, Madison Square Garden. 465-6000. Feb. 14 at 8.

Ivy Austin—Winter Garden, World Financial Center, Battery Park City. Feb. 14 at 6:30. No tickets necessary.

Zlatne Uste Balkan Brass Band—With Urban Women/Village Songs, in a program of East-ern European music. (Dance Theatre Workshop, 219 W. 19th St. 924-0077. Feb. 14 at 8.)

Art Garfunkel—Carnegie Hall. Feb. 14 at 8.

Mark Tucker—In an all-Ellington program. (Miller Theatre, Columbia University, Broadway at 116th St. 854-7799. Feb. 15 at 8.)

ROCK AND FOLK

Academy, 234 W. 43rd St.—A cozy former theatre, situated a few doors away from Times Square, where techno and alternative-rock bands, among others, occasionally turn up. The **juliana hatfield** three is here on Feb. 11, with Dig. A former Blake Baby, Hatfield doesn't enjoy being a girl very much, but rock critics seem to relish her tales of post-feminist self-loathing and post-adolescent ennui. Perhaps it's her coy but deceptively supple voice that sucks them in, or her intuitive way with an axe—a guitar, that is. For concert information, call 249-8870.

Bottom Line, 15 W. 4th St., at Mercer St. (228-6300)—This week, the club continues its twentieth-anniversary celebration, which will run through early April. On Feb. 10, **john hammond** fills the air with Delta blues and bottleneck guitar. On Feb. 11-12, club favorite Buster Poindexter sheds his disguise and reveals himself as singer/actor/downtown dude **david johansen.** On Feb. 13, **leo kottke** drops by. One of the most adventurous six- and twelve-string players around, Kottke has been making great acoustic-guitar records since the seventies. The influence of his astounding technique and pure, ringing tone can be heard all over the pop-music map. On Feb. 14: two of folk-rock's finest, **richard thompson** and **shawn colvin,** spend Valentine's Day sharing their friendship and music.

CAROLYN GOWDY

Café Sin-é, 122 St. Marks Pl. (982-0370)—A small peach-walled storefront, Sin-é is usually given over to a young, earthy crowd that drinks Rolling Rock or espresso and waits for some Irish musician or other to blow in and play a set. **daniel cartier** arrives on Feb. 10. Cartier performed his first New York gigs on street corners and subway platforms. These days, the twenty-four-year-old singer-songwriter—he has also modelled for magazines and rock videos—is a downtown club fixture, evoking Generation X ennui with the sweetest tenor (Irish or not) we've heard in a while.

RECORD STORE ARRIVALS

A highly selective list of new releases we've been waiting to hear.

RICHARD THOMPSON, "Mirror Blue" (Capitol).

CHAINSAW KITTENS, "Pop Heiress" (Mammoth).

DAVID WILCOX, "Big Horizon" (A&M).

BLACK SABBATH, "Cross Purposes" (I.R.S.).

BEN HARPER, "Welcome to the Cruel World" (Virgin).

LISETTE MELENDEZ, "True to Life" (Chaos/RAL/Fever).

ALISON KRAUSS AND THE COX FAMILY, "I Know Who Holds Tomorrow" (Rounder).

Irving Plaza, 17 Irving Pl., at 15th St. (777-6800)—The band **james** appears on Feb. 15. Although this Manchester-based group formed in the early eighties, its promising vision of dreamy, cerebral pop never truly came into focus until last year. That's when the lads hooked up with Brian Eno, the father of ambient music and a producer who has worked atmospheric magic for the likes of Bowie, Talking Heads, and U2. Under Eno's guidance, the lovely melodies on James's 1993 album, "Laid," shimmer and swirl, uninhibited by the sort of arbitrary ticks and digressions that blemish too much alternative rock. James's live performances are also blissfully shtick-free, so the songs shine through. . . . ¶ The Swing Dance Society gathers here every Sunday night, at the Continental Club. The dancers all share a passion for the Lindy Hop, a dance that involves a lot of whirling and the occasional display of underwear. Sets from eight until midnight. For information on the society, call 696-9737.

Limelight, Sixth Ave. at 20th St. (807-7850)—A church turned eighties hot spot, this unholy venue currently plays host to a variety of techno and alternative acts. **nudeswirl** rolls in on Feb. 13, with guests **psychic orgy** and **the sense.** "We've never been compared to the same band twice," notes Nudeswirl's bassist, Christopher (Iggy) Wargo. O.K., how about this: Nudeswirl's hybrid of metal and psychedelic pop might be usefully compared with elements from Black Sabbath, the Smiths, Sonic Youth, Smashing Pumpkins, and Nirvana. What sets Nudeswirl apart is the source of its feedback attack: the growls and moans of a hollow-bodied guitar.

Maxwell's, 1039 Washington St., Hoboken. (1-201 798-4064)—The bands that play here today will be playing somewhere more expensive tomorrow. **flop** and **helium** are here on Feb. 12. Helium is a New York-based band, while Flop hails from the West Coast. Musically, however, the groups pretty much live on the same street, both offering loud but lyrical guitar-based rock.

Roseland, 239 W. 52nd St. (247-0200)—A dark, sweaty rock club, complete with flannel-clad stage divers and the occasional whirling mosh pit. Headbanger dreams come true on Feb. 15, when **black sabbath** and **motörhead** arrive. This heavy-duty double bill features, respectively, the founding fathers of death metal and speed metal. Unfortunately, like most founding fathers, these guys belong in a museum, not on a stage. Sabbath's post-Ozzy Osbourne work has been dull and indistinct, but after twenty years Motörhead is still breaking eardrums with effortless panache.

Sounds of Brazil, 204 Varick St., at W. Houston St. (243-4940)—**buckwheat zydeco** performs on Feb. 15. Zydeco, the eponymous ambassador of zydeco music (a Cajun gumbo of accordion-heavy grooves), is a true party professional. Seasoned by decades of touring, Buckwheat knows how to make even the most uptight New York crowd dance. Keep your eye on the washboard player. Dining. Closed Sundays.

Tramps, 51 W. 21st St. (727-7788)—Low lighting, muraled pillars, ironwork, a beautifully restored stamped-tin ceiling, and very little elbow room. Zydeco, soul, blues, and rock are the main orders of business here. On Feb. 12: **five chinese brothers,** with Lou Ann Barton, and Angela Strehli with the Antone's

All-Stars. Five Chinese Brothers formed more than a decade ago at Columbia University (as the Special Guests) and have since become local heroes and one of smart pop's great journeyman acts. Think Squeeze or Crowded House, only louder, looser, bluesier—more American. On Feb. 15, **LOUP GAROU** hosts a mini Mardi Gras, with special guests Tina Weymouth, Chris Franz, and local legend Phoebe Légère.

WETLANDS, 161 Hudson St. (966-4225)—A warehouse complex for neo-hippies and other party animals. On Feb. 10, the **NEW ORIGINALS** bring their stylish rock to the scene. On Feb. 11: **THE NIAGARAS.** On Feb. 12: the **OTHER HALF** and the expansive folk-pop of **DAVID SLOMIN AND THE REGULARS.**

JAZZ AND BLUES

BLUE NOTE, 131 W. 3rd St., near Sixth Ave. (475-8592)—**IVAN LINS** continues through Feb. 13. Lins's adventurous new record, "Awa Yiô," is a lot closer in spirit to Sting than to the muted bossa nova of his countryman Antonio Carlos Jobim. His live shows are always a feast of rich salsa-inflected pop and velvety Brazilian melodies. On Feb. 15, **JOE HENDERSON** and **ABBEY LINCOLN** begin weeklong engagements—and to celebrate the joys of middle-aged resurgence. Henderson's solos are as scrupulously inventive as ever. Lincoln, of the gutsy survivor spirit and indeterminate pitch, struts and sings as if this is the last comeback she ever intends to make. Dining.

THE COOLER, 416 W. 14th St. (229-0785) On Feb. 10: **THE SOLSONICS.** This jazz-funk outfit is based in L.A., a city better known for its gangsta rap than for the eclectic sounds coming out of its thriving underground club scene. That scene has produced the Solsonics, a combo that blends slamming hip-hop grooves with sultry Latin and reggae textures. Thursday nights belong to **GIANT STEP,** a roving collective of musicians, rappers, and d.j.s who mix jazz, funk, and hip-hop.

DOWN BEAT, 101 Seventh Ave. S. (620-4000)—A long, warm, wood-panelled room with upholstered banquettes, a nicely appointed bar, and a reliable roster of jazz names. Murals of Diz, Bird, and Basie adorn the walls, so the players are always in good company. **CARRIE SMITH** starts on Feb. 15.

FAT TUESDAY'S, 190 Third Ave., at 17th St. (533-7900)—Through Feb. 13: Singer **CAROL SLOANE.** The **GEORGE COLEMAN** quartet arrives on Feb. 15. On Mondays, guitarist-inventor **LES PAUL,** the Thomas Edison of reverb, leads a trio. Dining.

KNICKERBOCKER, 33 University Pl., at 9th St. (228-8490)—**STEVE KUHN** and **STEVE LA SPINA** are here through Feb. 12. As lyrical as he is overlooked, pianist Kuhn has mined a lifetime of diverse work—from a stint with Coltrane's first working band and his own forays on ECM to his present-day identity as tough-minded standard-bearer—and forged a winning personal style. Bassist La Spina provides him with formidable accompaniment. **LARRY RIVERS** stops by on Feb. 13.

KNITTING FACTORY, 47 E. Houston St., near Mulberry St. (219-3055)—**SFEQ,** a Dutch hip-hop outfit, plays on Feb. 14.

MANNY'S CAR WASH, 1558 Third Ave., at 87th St. (369-2583)—The Upper East Side Blues. **BO DIDDLEY, JR.,** he of the legendary lineage, plays on Feb. 9.

PADDY REILLY'S MUSIC BAR, 495 Second Ave., at 28th St. (686-1210)—Prepare for a packed room, flowing Guinness, and an Irish-hootenanny atmosphere. **BLACK 47** usually plays on Wednesdays and Saturdays.

RED BLAZER TOO, 349 W. 46th St. (262-3112)—Mondays belong to the Smith Street Society jazz band; Tuesdays to Jim Lawyer and his Bluebird Society Orchestra; Thursdays to Stan Rubin's big band; Fridays to Lew Anderson's big band and Sam Ulano and his Bourbon Street Swingers; and Saturdays to Bob Cantwell and his Stompers.

SWEET BASIL, 88 Seventh Ave. S., at Bleecker St. (242-1785)—Through Feb. 13: **THE ETHNIC HERITAGE ENSEMBLE,** featuring Kahil el Zabar, Joseph Bowie, and Edward Wilkerson. **PHILIP MANUEL** is here on Feb. 14, and the **JACK WALRATH** quintet starts on Feb. 15. Dining.

TAVERN ON THE GREEN, Central Park W. at 67th St. (873-3200)—This legendary tourist haven makes serious jazz fans welcome in the Chestnut Room. It resembles a hunting lodge and is every bit as over the top as the rest of the establishment, but the bookings are impressive. The **BENNY GREEN** trio continues through Feb. 13. Green has a serious case of the funkies. Unfortunately, this pianist's obvious love for the earthy gospel-blues sound of Horace Silver, Hampton Hawes, and Phineas Newborn often exceeds his own talent for playing it. When he

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ROUND HERE (Counting Crows, "August and Everything After").

THE BUDDHA OF SUBURBIA (David Bowie, "The Buddha of Suburbia").

VICTIME DE LA MODE (MC Solaar, "Qui Sème le Vent Récolte le Tempo").

ADIEU (Khaled, "N'ssi N'ssi").

JUST LIKE THE WEATHER (Suzy Bogguss, "Something up My Sleeve").

GET REAL (Kelly Willis, "Kelly Willis").

'74-'75 (The Connells, "Ring").

ELDERLY WOMAN BEHIND THE COUNTER IN A SMALL TOWN (Pearl Jam, "Vs.").

FULL MOON, DIRTY HEARTS (INXS, "Full Moon, Dirty Hearts").

KARE, KARE (Crowded House, "Together Alone").

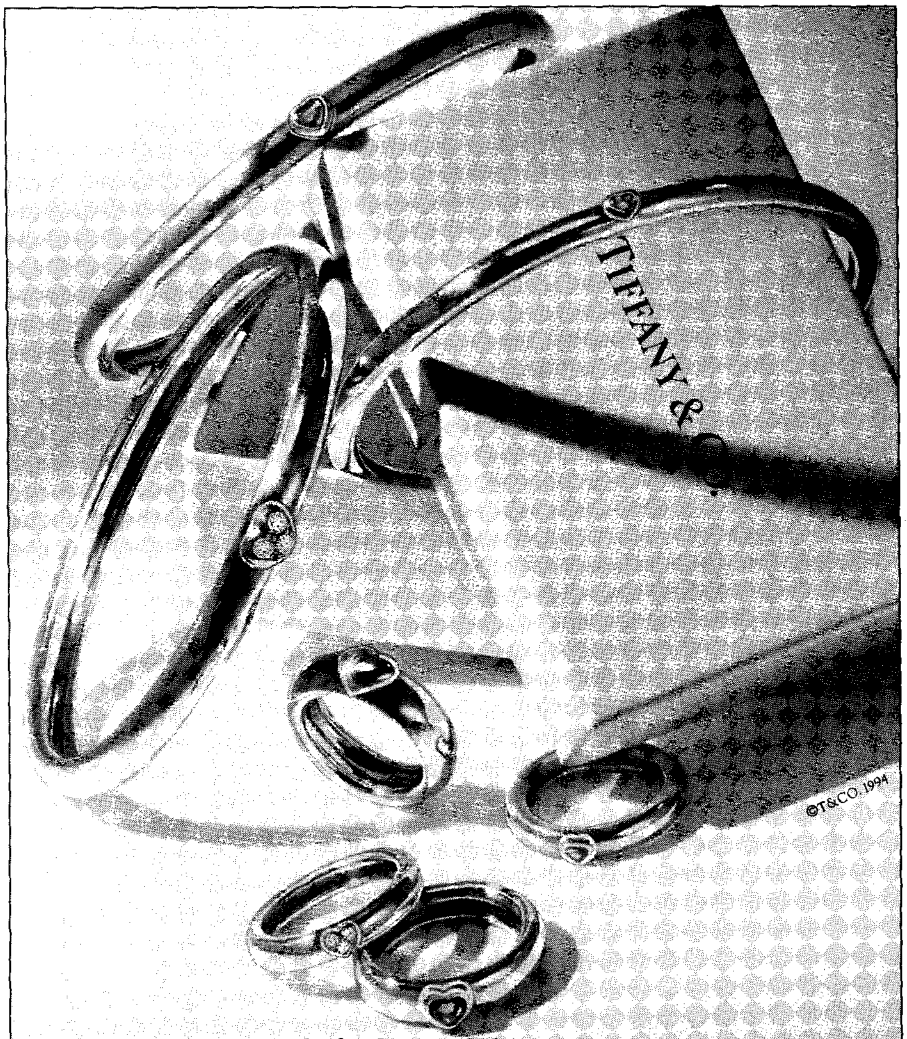
CANTALOOP (FLIP FANTASIA) (US 3, "Hand on the Torch").

BIG GAY HEART (The Lemonheads, "Come On Feel the Lemonheads").

STANDING AT THE GATE (E, "Broken Toy Shop").

ANNIVERSARY SONG (Cowboy Junkies, "Pale Sun, Crescent Moon").

NOSTALGIA (Cracker, "Kerosene Hat").



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NIGHT LIFE—Cont'd

leaves the mannerisms aside, though, Green can be a most persuasive modern stylist, crisp and intelligent. The **AHMAD JAMAL** trio begins on Feb. 15. Dining.

TIME CAFÉ, 380 Lafayette St. (533-7000)—Hidden inside this restaurant is a two-story club called Fez. Every Thursday you can catch the **MINGUS BIG BAND,** a fourteen-piece ensemble that concentrates exclusively on the tricky, cacophonous work of its catalyst, the late Charles Mingus. Dining.

VILLAGE VANGUARD, 178 Seventh Ave. S., at 11th St. (255-4037)—A classic jazz club—subterranean and smoky—thick with the spirits of past masters. The **LOU DONALDSON** quartet continues through Feb. 13, now with **LONNIE SMITH** on organ. Mondays are reserved for the **VANGUARD JAZZ ORCHESTRA.**

CABARETS AND STANDARDS

ALGONQUIN HOTEL, 59 W. 44th St. (840-6800)—The hotel's long and narrow Oak Room may not be ideally shaped for a night club, but the singers it books are generally savvy enough to overcome the challenge. **KT SULLIVAN** hails from Boggy Depot, Oklahoma, but she's a sophisticate at the core. The soprano's chameleonic vocal style covers the spectrum; Barbara Cook and Cleo Laine are just two points of reference among many. Sullivan's shows usually include a generous helping of the sort of Broadway and Hollywood songs that endure longer than the musicals for which they were written. Her current program (which will run through Feb. 26) is a tribute to the grandes dames of the silver screen. Late shows on Fridays and Saturdays are given over to Dietz and Schwartz standards. Dining.

BALLROOM, 253 W. 28th St. (244-3005)—A cool green music hall that features a steady stream of international pop and cabaret stars, as well as the occasional drag queen. The Ballroom is also a tapas restaurant—if you haven't had dinner, you may never make it to the show. Brazilian singer **LENY ANDRADE** finishes her two-week run on Feb. 12; **NANA VASCONCELOS** begins his on Feb. 15. Closed Mondays.

CARLYLE HOTEL, *Madison Ave., at 76th St.* (744-1600) Holy eyelashes, Batman, it's **EARTHA KITT,** in for a six-week run at the Carlyle. Kitt is now in her sixties, and she's still a fierce and funny performer with a feral grip on her audience. She inhabits her songs: when she sings "I Wanna Be Evil," you don't doubt for a second that she could spit tacks. . . . ¶ **RONNY WHYTE** *presides at the* piano in Bemelmans Bar, across the hall.

EIGHTY EIGHT'S, 228 W. 10th St. (924-0088)—Time stops for no man; but for **HILDEGARDE** it does at least seem to bend a little. The toast of royalty in the thirties, of G.I.s in the forties, and of Persian Room denizens in the fifties, she just goes on singing, playing, and wearing those divine evening gloves. What better way for this mother superior of chanteuses to celebrate her eighty-eighth birthday than by tickling the eighty-eight here on Feb. 9?

RAINBOW & STARS, 30 Rockefeller Plaza. (632-5000)—American treasure **ROSEMARY CLOONEY** continues a monthlong engagement this week. Forty-three years after her first hit single, the wacky "Come On-a My House," Clooney's voice is still as warm and welcoming as her presentation is fresh, assured, and funny. With pianist **JOHN ODDO** (also her musical director for the past decade) and a band of other Clooney stalwarts: **WARREN VACHÉ, SCOTT HAMILTON, JAY LEONHART,** and **JOE COCUZZO.** Closed Mondays.

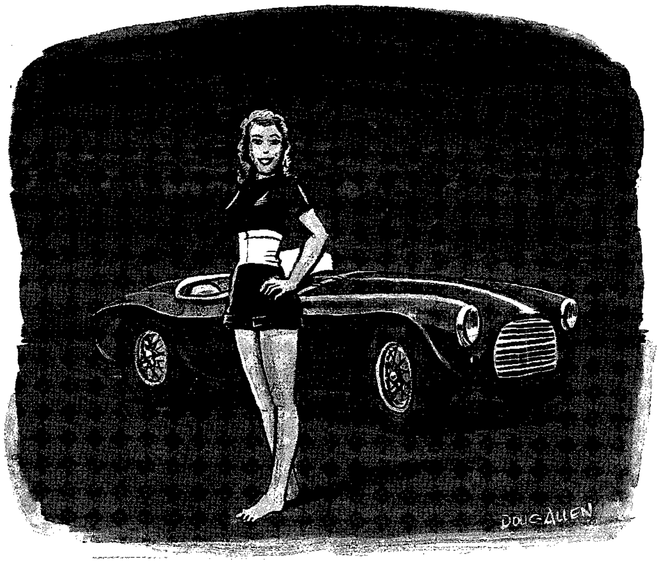
RUSSIAN TEA ROOM, 150 W. 57th St. (265-0947)—Broadway personality **BETTY BUCKLEY** performs on Feb. 13. Dining.

ART

No Respect

MARTIN KIPPENBERGER is something of a cult figure in the German art world, a fact that may surprise Americans unfamiliar with his work. After all, Kippenberger's art defies the implicit demands for legibility and decorum that govern even the most wildly "transgressive" American art. A cynic, a prankster, and a nihilist, Kippenberger rejects any ameliorative function for art. And, in America, art, like breakfast cereal, is supposed to be good for you.

"Pictures of an Exhibition," at Metro Pictures, is a well-crafted mini-retrospective of Kippenberger's paintings from the past decade, and it provides a sly introduction to the artist's corrosive humor and anarchic, neo-Dadaist sensibility. Several of these paintings, removed from their original installational contexts, function like punch lines minus the jokes: you stare at them, smile wanly, and pretend to get it. But Kippenberger's derisive humor can be quite pointed regarding the pieties of the art world and the world at large. "Mountain of Yielded Income with Economic Values by Joseph Beuys II" (1985) is a painting of economic-growth charts onto which the artist has affixed some Beuys objets from his own collection, suggesting that even if you think Kippenberger's art is worthless, Beuys remains a solid investment. In another infamous painting, "Cemetery Fun" (1990), a skeleton with a huge, preposterous erection rises from the grave to embrace a voluptuous naked woman. The source of the image is a nineteenth-century pornographic print, and the canvas has been overlaid with a layer of repulsive, dirty-looking yellowish rubber. It's one of Kippenberger's prophylactic paintings, all of which are safely encased in latex.



Ferraris at MOMA.

DOUG ALLEN

MUSEUMS

METROPOLITAN MUSEUM, Fifth Ave. at 82nd St.—Paintings and drawings from the late-eighteenth century to the early-twentieth *by Caspar David Friedrich and Ferdi*nand Hodler, among others. Opens Feb. 13. . . . ¶ "The Golden Age of Danish Painting," features the work, from the late-eighteenth through the mid-nineteenth centuries, of Christoffer Wilhelm Eckersberg, who influenced students (including Christen Købke, whose work is also in the *exhibit) to paint in plein-air style. Opens* Feb. 13. . . . ¶ Visitors can now walk into the first chamber of the Temple of Dendur. . . . ¶ "Degas Landscapes." Seventy-five paintings, pastels, and monotypes that reveal a lesser-known side of Degas's oeuvre: the great outdoors. The exhibit includes a tremendous range of styles and natural vistas, from early Italian countrysides to mature, deftly rendered French seascapes. Many of the images are on view for the first time since a solo Degas show in 1892. . . . ¶ "Illustrated Poetry and Epic Images: Persian Painting of the 1330s and 1340s." . . . ¶ An exhibition of sixteenth-century Italian drawings, with work by Caravaggio, Fra Bartolommeo, Bronzino, and many others. . . . ¶ "Recent Work," a mini-retrospective of more than fifty portraits by Lucian Freud. Through March 13. . . . ¶ The New Costume Institute celebrates five decades of the work of Diana Vreeland. . . . ¶ "The Gold of Meroe" features the jewelry of Queen Amanishakheto of Meroe, an ancient Nubian ruler. . . . ¶ "Elephant: The Animal and Its Ivory in African Art" includes seventy objects, from elephant masks to intricately carved tusks, representing more than twenty different indigenous cultures. . . . ¶ "Immortals and Sages: Fusuma Paintings from Ryoan-ji and the Lore of China in Japanese Art." (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, 9:30 to 5:15, and Friday and Saturday evenings until 8:45.)

MUSEUM OF MODERN ART, 11 W. 53rd St.—"Three Masters of the Bauhaus: Lyonel Feininger, Wassily Kandinsky, and Paul Klee" comprises roughly seventy-five prints and illustrated books from the museum's collection. . . . ¶ Twenty-five years of Brooke Alexander Editions, which publishes prints and multiples of contemporary artists, including Richard Artschwager and Lorna Simpson. . . . ¶ "Designed for Speed: Three Automobiles by Ferrari." MOMA's first automobile exhibition in more than fifteen years features three bodacious hot rods: a 1990 Formula One racing car, a 1987 F40 "super car" (the fastest car available for purchase at the time), and a 1950 166MM Barchetta, the prototypical two-seat convertible. . . . ¶ "Gesture and Pose: Twentieth-Century Photographs from the Collection." (Open Saturdays through Tuesdays, 11 to 6; Thursdays and Fridays, noon to 8:30.)

GUGGENHEIM MUSEUM, Fifth Ave. at 89th St.—"Robert Morris: The Mind/Body Problem." A retrospective of Morris's minimalist and conceptual sculptures, drawings, and *performance films. In conjunction* with the artist's show at the Guggenheim SoHo. (Open Sundays through Wednesdays, 10 to 6, and Fridays and Saturdays, 10 to 8.)

GUGGENHEIM MUSEUM SOHO, 575 Broadway—"Robert Morris: The Mind/Body Problem." Nine installations with mirrors. . . . ¶ *Eighty* watercolors, made between 1911 and 1944, by the Russian artist Wassily Kandinsky (1866-1944), whose art has been so well assimilated into the mainstream that it feels like a kind of modernism lite. The earlier works, with their nervous, liquescent, quasi-figurative shapes, represent Kandinsky's art at its strongest. . . . ¶ "Industrial Elegance," a lobby exhibition, salutes design excellence in everyday objects, from ice-cube makers to Frisbees. Through March 6. (Open Wednesdays through Sundays, 11 to 6, and Saturday evenings until 8.)

Whitney Museum of American Art, Madison Ave. at 75th St.—"Collection in Context: A Year from the Collection Circa 1952." Some seventy-five paintings, sculptures, prints, drawings, and photographs. Opens Feb. 12. . . . ¶ A dual exhibition of work by photographers Walker Evans (1903-75) and Dan Graham (born 1942). Both are heavy on urban and suburban drear: tract housing, diners, billboards, and the landscape of commerce are the recurrent motifs. Graham's videos are also on view. . . . ¶ More than a hundred and sixty paintings, sculptures, drawings, and site-specific installations by Mike Kelley. Through Feb. 20. (Open Wednesdays, and Fridays through Sundays, 11 to 6; Thursdays, 1 to 8.)

American Museum of Natural History, Central Park W. at 79th St.—"Sharks! Fact and Fantasy" includes a walk-through diorama with life-size models of seventeen species of shark. (Open daily, 10 to 5:45, and Friday and Saturday evenings until 8:45.)

Brooklyn Museum, Eastern Parkway—An exhibition of more than five hundred Egyptian objects from the museum's extensive collection, spanning thirteen hundred years of Pharaonic history. . . . ¶ More than a hundred realist photographs by Consuelo Kanaga (1894-1978). Through Feb. 27. (Open Wednesdays through Sundays, 10 to 5.)

American Craft Museum, 40 W. 53rd St.—"The Ideal Home: 1900-20." Through Feb. 27. (Open Tuesdays, 10 to 8; Wednesdays through Sundays, 10 to 5.)

China Institute, 125 E. 65th St.—"Sending Away the Old, Welcoming the New: Celebrating Chinese New Year." Traditional costumes, toys, ritual and household objects, and clothes, dating from the Han dynasty (209 B.C.-220 A.D.) to the present. Through March 5. (Open Mondays through Saturdays, 10 to 5, and Tuesday evenings until 8.)

Cooper-Hewitt Museum, Fifth Ave. at 91st St.—"Packaging the New: Design and the American Consumer 1925-1975." . . . ¶ "Fancy Fronts: Men's Waistcoats from the Eighteenth Century." Through Feb. 13. (Open Tuesdays, 10 to 9, with no admission charge after 5; Wednesdays through Saturdays, 10 to 5; Sundays, noon to 5.)

Jewish Museum, Fifth Ave. at 92nd St.—"A Postcolonial Kinderhood." A bedroom installation by Elaine Reichek, featuring twelve samplers embroidered with quotations about Jewish identity. . . . ¶ "Four Contemporary Works," by Aharon Gluska, Vivienne Koorland, Robert Wilson, and Joe Zucker. (Open Mondays, Wednesdays, Thursdays, and Sundays, 11 to 5:45; Tuesdays, 11 to 8.)

Morgan Library, 29 E. 36th St.—"Gutenberg and the Genesis of Printing." At the center of this exhibit are the library's three Gutenberg Bibles (the single largest collection in the world) and a replica of the press on which they were printed. The show, which documents the rapid spread of the printed word, includes copies of the first books printed in several European countries, the first printed Hebrew Bible, and a section on William Caxton, Chaucer's publisher, who first printed "The Canterbury Tales." On Saturdays and Sundays at 1, there are demonstrations on the press. (Open Tuesdays through Fridays, 10:30 to 5; Saturdays, 10:30 to 6; Sundays, noon to 6.)

Museum for African Art, 593 Broadway—"Fusion: West African Artists at the Venice Biennale." Paintings, sculptures, and drawings, recently exhibited in Venice, by Mor Faye and Moustapha Dime, of Senegal, and Tamessir Dia, Ouattara, and Gerard Santoni, of the Ivory Coast. (Open Tuesdays through Fridays, 10:30 to 5:30; Saturdays, noon to 8; Sundays, noon to 6.)

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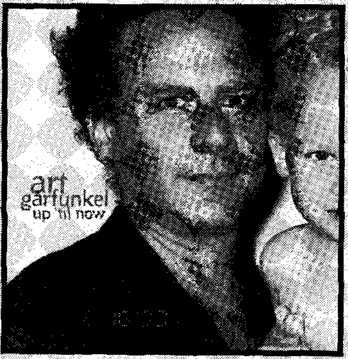

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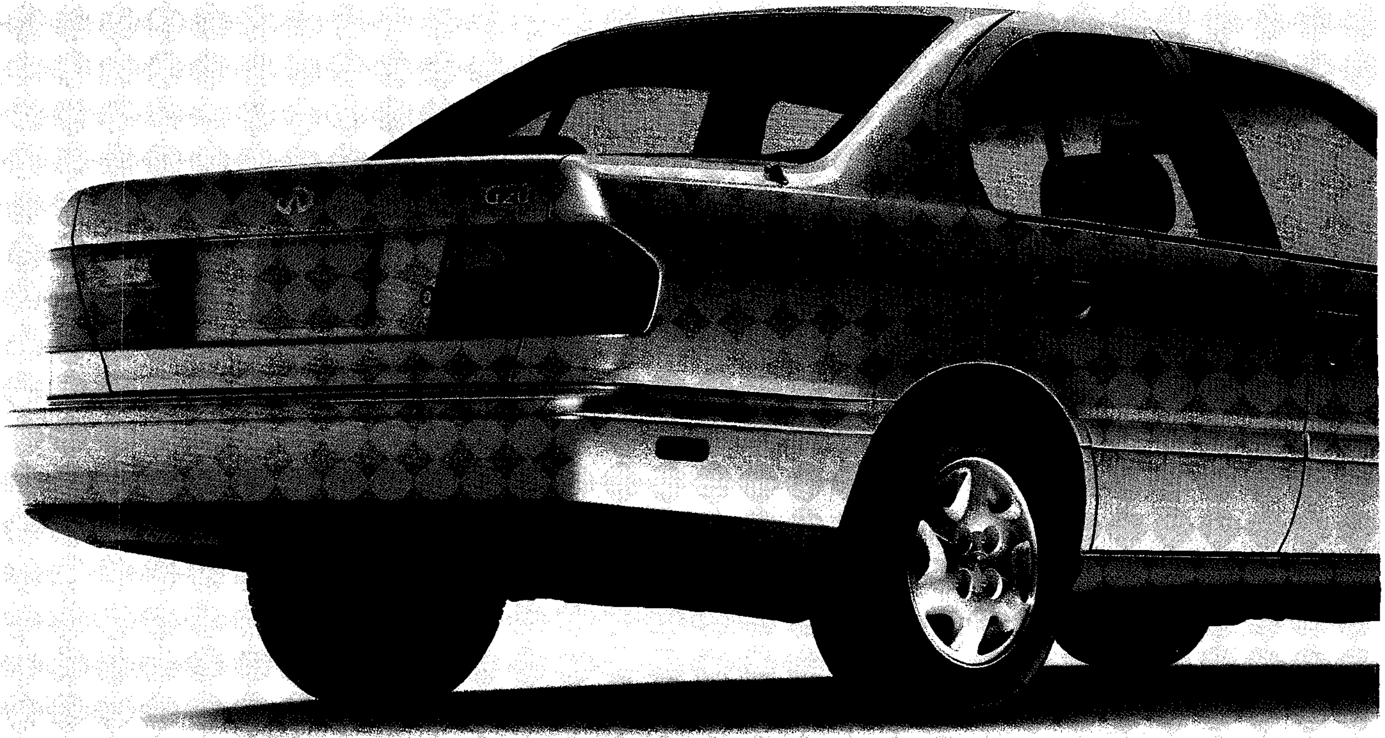

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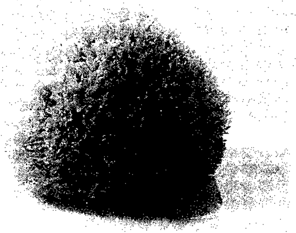

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Museum of American Folk Art, Columbus Ave. at 65th St.—"Revisiting Ammi Phillips: Fifty Years of American Portraiture." A retrospective that includes fifty paintings by Phillips (1788-1865). (Open daily, except Mondays, 11:30 to 7:30.)

Museum of the City of New York, Fifth Ave. at 104th St.—"Broadway Cavalcade: From the Battery to Harlem" follows the history of the Great White Way, from its origins as an Indian footpath to its fame as the Champs-Élysées of the Big Apple. (Open Wednesdays through Saturdays, 10 to 5; Sundays, 1 to 5.)

National Academy of Design, Fifth Ave. at 89th St.—"American Dimensions" features forty-one nineteenth-century sculptural works in plaster, marble, and bronze. Through Feb. 27. (Open Wednesdays through Sundays, noon to 5; Friday evenings until 8, with no admission charge after 5.)

New Museum, 583 Broadway—"Bad Girls," a new exhibition that brings a subversive sense of humor to feminist issues. The show features paintings, sculpture, photography, and performance art by more than forty women artists, including Janine Antoni and Nancy Dwyer. Through Feb. 27. (Open Wednesdays through Fridays, and Sundays, noon to 6; Saturdays, noon to 8.)

New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, Lincoln Center—"The House I Live In: American Performance in the Era of Blacklisting" documents the effect of blacklisting on the entertainment industry. Opens Feb. 11. (Open Mondays and Thursdays, noon to 8; Tuesdays, Wednesdays, Fridays, and Saturdays, noon to 6.)

P.S. 1, 46-01 21st St., Long Island City—"Stalin's Choice: Soviet Socialist Realism 1932-56" includes more portraits of Stalin than you could ever hope to see, and work by the contemporary Russian artists Komar and Melamid. (Open Wednesdays through Sundays, noon to 6.)

Schomburg Center, 515 Lenox Ave., at 135th St.—"African Zion: The Sacred Art of Ethiopia." With a focus on Christian art of Ethiopia, the show includes icons, illuminated manuscripts, and coins from the fourth to the eighteenth centuries. (Open Mondays through Wednesdays, noon to 8; Thursdays through Saturdays, 10 to 6; Sundays, 1 to 5.)

GALLERIES—UPTOWN

(Unless otherwise noted, galleries are open Tuesdays through Saturdays from around 10 or 11 to between 5 and 6. The following listings lead off with new shows.)

Richard Diebenkorn (1922-93)—Ocean Park paintings on paper, from 1971 to 1992. Opens Feb. 10. Through March 8. (Knoedler, 19 E. 70th St.)

Joe Lasker—Landscapes, interiors, and scenes of New York. Opens Feb. 12. Through March 12. (Kraushaar, 724 Fifth Ave., at 57th St.)

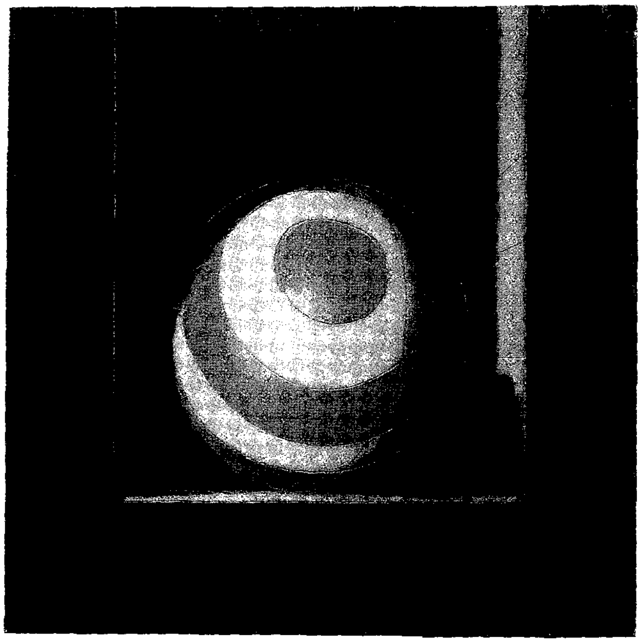
Alice Neel (1900-84)—Paintings of people and views in Spanish Harlem, where the artist lived from 1938 to 1961. Opens Feb. 15. Through March 19. (Robert Miller, 41 E. 57th St.)

James Surls—Suspended and freestanding sculptures with figurative elements, made of tree trunks and branches. Opens Feb. 10. Through March 5. (Marlborough, 40 W. 57th St. Open Mondays.)

•

Thomas Schmit—Colored-pencil drawings by a clever German artist, in his first solo United States exhibition. Schmit's drawings evince a childlike exuberance and an adult refinement that inevitably call to mind Paul Klee's work. But as a hedge against too much winsome charm, Schmit throws in a dash of contemporary-art-world cynicism, remarking in the show's catalogue, "A good night's drawing may take at least three times as much effort as a pleasant afternoon's typing; but then again, it brings in at least thirty times as much money." Through Feb. 26. (Werner, 21 E. 67th St.)

John Gibson—Gibson's scarified paintings of spiral-patterned spheres arranged in the shape of pyramids seem straightforward at first glance, but when you turn your back you have the sensation the balls will all tumble. These aren't paintings of anything, in a sense (they're about perception, color and light, and reflection), yet they aren't abstract, either. Smaller paintings on wood of single spheres are more abstract, with scratches gouged into their surfaces: "Dots and Cut-Out Niche," with a shadowy blue-white shape on a black ground, was actually done on a panel that was cut out and reinserted. Through March 12. (Perspective, 19 E. 71st St. Open Mondays.)



Self-portrait by John Gibson.

Gretna Campbell (1922-87)—Expressionistic landscapes of Maine and New Jersey, in the first New York gallery show of this artist's work since her death. Through March 5. (De Nagy, 41 W. 57th St.)

Elaine de Kooning (1920-89)—Paintings, watercolors, and works on paper, all of the statue of Bacchus in the Luxembourg Gardens, which the artist saw in 1976. Through Feb. 26. (Fischbach, 24 W. 57th St.)

Alan Feltus—Enigmatic paintings of figures in interiors, incorporating postcards of Old Master paintings, by an American artist who lives in Umbria. Through March 5. (Forum, 745 Fifth Ave., at 57th St.)

Morris Graves and Mark Tobey (1890-1976)—Twenty-two paintings, dating from the forties to the seventies, underscoring the shared origins and objectives of these two visionary artists of the Northwest. Through Feb. 28. (Schmidt Bingham, 41 E. 57th St.)

Gaston Lachaise (1882-1935)—Monumental cast-bronze male and female nudes by a French-American sculptor who worked in the grand manner that began with Egyptian and Greco-Roman art and continued with Rodin and Maillol. Through Feb. 26. (Salander-O'Reilly, 20 E. 79th St. Open Mondays.)

Jenny Lee / Wolf Kahn—Sculptures made from found steel objects that recall relics of an ancient culture, by a Malaysian-born artist. / Pastels executed in New England, the Southwest, and Yosemite National Park. Through Feb. 26. (Borgenicht, 724 Fifth Ave., at 57th St.)

Fernand Léger (1881-1955)—A show of tapestries and mosaics, focussing on the artist's well-known themes: "Les Loisirs," "Les Constructeurs," and "Les Trois Musiciens"; also, small ceramic sculptures. Through April 2. (Marisa del Re, 41 E. 57th St.)

Linda Matalon—Abstract sculptures derived from the human form, made of industrial hardware and wire veiled in gauze and wax. Through Feb. 26. (Yoshii, 20 W. 57th St.)

Dorothea Rockburne—Four new paintings in Lascaux acrylic applied directly on the gallery walls in a style reminiscent of fresco secco. Rockburne remains a resolutely high-minded abstractionist, but a strain of Jetsons-style futurism keeps her work lively. Through Feb. 26. (Emmerich, 41 E. 57th St.)

Mark Rothko (1903-70)—Early paintings from the thirties and forties, plus a work from 1951, tracing the origins of this Abstract Expressionist's mature style. Through March 19. (Wallach Gallery, Columbia University, Broadway at 116th St. Wednesdays through Saturdays, 1 to 5.)

Myron Stout (1908-87)—Abstractions in color, from 1950 and 1951, predating the black-and-white paintings for which he is best known. Through March 12. (Washburn, 20 W. 57th St.)

"Buddhist Images in Gilt Metal"—The fifty small (less than three feet high) sculptures in this lovely show are mostly mercury-gilded brass, and range from the thirteenth to the eighteenth centuries. Despite the opulence of the material and the sometimes extreme stylization, nearly all project the restraint and serenity associated with Buddhist aesthetics. This is especially true of the statues of the Buddha himself, such as a subtly expressive attenuated early-fifteenth-century figure with tight curls. A few pieces are pleasingly whimsical, too: a thirteenth-century Manjusri is seated on a pug-nosed lion with curly whiskers and matching eyebrows, mane, and tail; a 1761 Vaisravana (part of a birthday present from the Qianlong emperor to his mother) holds an career-eyed mongoose with a pearl (a symbol of wealth) in its mouth. Through March 11. (Taipei, 1221 Sixth Ave., at 49th St. Open Mondays.)

GALLERIES—DOWNTOWN

Beth Ames Swartz—Spiritual, cosmological paintings. Opens Feb. 10. Through March 19. (Donahue, 560 Broadway.)

•

Bruce Nauman—Fortune, risk, illusion, and peril are the recurrent motifs in "Falls, Pratfalls, and Sleights of Hand" (1993), a video installation. The five projected videos feature, among other images, a man slipping on a banana peel and falling with almost balletic grace; a woman's hands shuffling an elegant deck of cards; a woman seated in a metal folding chair, hovering in space; and various magic tricks. Nauman has composed these videos to mesmerizing effect, like a set of variations on a theme. Through Feb. 19. (Castelli, 420 West Broadway.)

George Anthonisen—A collection of plaster bas-reliefs depicting vases, delicately carved in intaglio with goddesses, birds, and fruits, and decorated with mineral colors, limewater, and casein. A group of bronze sculptures, mostly of women bathers, is also on display. Through March 9. (Images, 580 Broadway. Mondays through Saturdays, noon to 5.)

Ed Baynard—New works (after a lengthy hiatus), consisting of lines and splatters of paint done in the Oriental tradition of the calligraphic gesture; also drawings. Through March 5. (Anderson, 476 Broome St.)

Lynda Benglis—Abstract, brilliant-colored wax and encaustic paintings on Masonite or cast plaster. Through Feb. 26. (Cooper, 155 Wooster St. Open Mondays.)

John Currin—Paintings and drawings focussing on two iconographic situations: older bearded men with luscious young female companions and women alone in bed, strangely becalmed, like cancer patients bravely facing death. There is something unspeakably smarmy about Currin's couples, as if he were revealing a particularly ghastly netherworld of unequal heterosexual relations. These are the kinds of paintings one loves to hate, and that's a virtue of sorts. Through Feb. 26. (Rosen, 130 Prince St.)

Don Eddy—Photo-Realist acrylic-on-canvas paintings. Some are like postcards of tropical vacation spots: exotic red flowers glisten over backdrops of sun-streaked water. In others, vertical triptychs have a bizarre equalizing effect, as in "Temenos," in which three canvases—white flowers on top, a waterfall in the middle, and choppy gray waves on the bottom—are linked by nothing but Eddy's skilled brand of verisimilitude. Through March 2. (Hoffman, 429 West Broadway.)

Jackie Ferrara—Wooden architectural models for swimming-pool complexes, mounted on tables or shelves. Through March 19. (Klein, 594 Broadway.)

Mike Glier—Ten paintings from the series "Garden Court," combining nature studies with subtle references to violence. Through March 5. (Baer, 476 Broome St.)

Minoru Kawabata—Paintings in which heavy brushstrokes slash through variegated color fields. Through Feb. 26. (Tilton, 47-49 Greene St.)

Martin Kippenberger—Fifteen paintings. Through Feb. 19. (Metro Pictures, 150 Greene St.)

Stephen Mueller—Mystical abstract paintings with biomorphic forms and translucent colors. Through March 3. (Nosei, 100 Prince St.)

Ann Preston—Sculptures that are both serene and grotesque. In "Baby," a work in concrete and steel, the seemingly perfect infant sucking its fingers turns out to be missing a leg. In the five-part series "Twins," two pinkish babies' heads, sculpted in beeswax, progressively merge, sharing first a forehead, then eyes, then nose, until, on the last pedestal, only a single gaping mouth remains. Through Feb. 26. (Toll, 146 Greene St.)

David Salle—Two exhibitions. At Boone, there are four 1983 works and two recent works. At Gagosian, there are ten new paintings and six sculptures. (Boone, 417 West Broadway, through Feb. 26; and Gagosian, 136 Wooster St., through Feb. 19.)

Al Souza / Pat Colville—Richly colored paintings with photolike imagery. / Paintings with markings and squiggles that seem to float on an oil surface. Through Feb. 26. (Condeso-Lawler, 524 Broadway.)

Osami Tanaka—Minimalist sculptures of wooden beams blackened with soot and oil. Through Feb. 26. (Haller, 560 Broadway.)

James Turrell—The artist has reconfigured the gallery to create what he calls a "structure of light." Through March 5. (Gladstone, 99 Greene St.)

Robert Wilson—The man of the theatre has installed "Three Rooms," each with its own prop-sculptures, lighting, and sound effects. *You* are the unwitting cast. The most mesmerizing room—a dim space lit with bare bulbs—is furnished with large, murky photostats said to be of an imprisoned Rudolf Hess and a pair of slatted steel beach chairs. Wilson provides the narrative himself, in recorded readings from the Old Testament and Heracleitus, interrupted by the squawks and shrieks of birds. The installation is at once inviting and forbidding. Through Feb. 26. (Ikeda, 130 Prince St.)

Robert Zakanitch—"The Big Bungalow Suite," a group of four paintings, each depicting an enormous curtain of floral imagery with an inset window giving onto a country landscape or waterfall. Through March 31. (McCoy, 129 Greene St.) . . . **note:** Paintings from 1991 to the present are showing concurrently at McCoy, 41 E. 57th St., through March 12.

PHOTOGRAPHY

Invisibilities

Spiritual states are difficult to represent in any medium,but photography faces a nearly absolute challenge. In very different ways, two exhibitions—one current and the other opening in a few weeks—reveal just how far pictures can take you into the soul. "Devotion, Faith and Fervor" (Gallery 292, 120 Wooster Street; through March 5) is a small show of images, from 1930 to 1992, documenting religious life in the rural South. Pictures by Walker Evans, Margaret Bourke-White, Robert Frank, and several lesser-known photographers seize on signs of faith and the stories they tell. One shot by Eudora Welty is a particularly remarkable image of belief as a transforming force: among a group of worshippers in church, the central figure is a woman so transported by her song that she looks like a rock of faith.

To turn from this to the images in Eugene Richards' "Cocaine True, Cocaine Blue" is jarring, yet Richards, too, is plumbing spiritual depths. (The exhibit will open at the uptown International Center of Photography on March 4; Aperture has just published the photo-essay as a book.) His subject is the hellish reality of lives devastated by drug addiction and the drug-related chaos in neighborhoods in New York and Philadelphia. Instead of faith, we see traces of its opposite—nihilism—in the disorienting angles and perspectives of Richards' images. The pictures often seem to have no point of view; they are about nothing but the mechanics and logistics of doing drugs: taking them, being high, turning tricks, waiting. Doing anything and risking anything, the human beings in Richards' photographs are utterly without the allure that other photographers have bestowed on people in similar images. The world of "Cocaine True, Cocaine Blue" is dark and hard, with no exit.

Kenro Izu—Floral studies and nudes. Through March 5. (Greenberg, 120 Wooster St.)

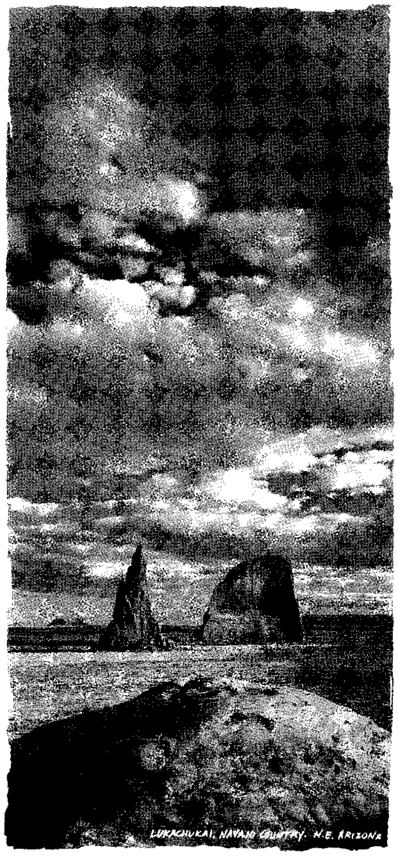
Tony Mendoza / Douglas Prince—Images of cats and dogs. / A twenty-year retrospective including unusual landscapes and acrylic-box photo sculptures. Through Feb. 26. (Witkin, 415 West Broadway.)

Susan Rankaitis—Photographs treated with paint, chemical washes, and other materials. Through March 12. (Mann, 42 E. 76th St.)

Joel Sternfeld—"On This Site . . ." Sternfeld's new work is based on a semiotic question: Are neutral images transcended by significant events? But his photographs—of a locker used to store bomb materials, of the site of a well-documented murder—are certainly more compelling than any theory. Through Feb. 26. (Pace-MacGill, 32 E. 57th St.)

International Center of Photography, 1130 Fifth Ave., at 94th St.—More than a hundred images by Robert Smithson (1938-73). Through Feb. 27. (Open daily, except Mondays, 11 to 6, and Tuesday evenings until 8.)

(See the museum listings for photography exhibitions at the Museum of Modern Art, the Brooklyn Museum, and the Whitney Museum of American Art.)



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CLASSICAL MUSIC

Still Moving Heart

Giovanni Pierluigi da Palestrina (ca. 1525-94) has never gone out of style. He earned his immortality through the sacred works he wrote while music director of Rome's greatest churches—St. Peter's, St. John Lateran, and Santa Maria Maggiore—during the heady days of the Counter-Reformation. Later generations of composers copied out pages of Palestrina and adapted his secrets to their own use. Many aspired to imitate him exactly; music that sounds like Palestrina's may turn out to have been composed at a Peruvian cathedral in the eighteenth century, or by a Vatican choirmaster last week.

When it was new, Palestrina's music was thought to represent the last word in fervent liturgical expressivity, but by the early twentieth century the Vatican was citing it as a model of chaste simplicity. Both points of view have always been true; the composer Charles Gounod recognized that when he spoke of Palestrina's "severe, ascetic music, calm and horizontal as the line of the ocean, monotonous by virtue of its serenity, anti-sensuous, and yet so intense in its contemplativeness that it verges sometimes on ecstasy." This magical balance comes often to mind when one listens to the many masterly, restrained Palestrina recordings of the Tallis Scholars, directed by Peter Phillips. Early this month, on the exact quatercentenary of Palestrina's death, the ten singers performed his works in the glorious expanse of Santa Maria Maggiore. When they repeat their tribute on February 10, at the Church of St. Mary the Virgin (145 West 46th Street), New Yorkers will have the opportunity to savor Palestrina's consummate counterpoint at its best.

(The box-office number for the Metropolitan Opera House is 362-6000; for Avery Fisher Hall, 875-5030; for Carnegie Hall and Weill Recital Hall, 247-7800; for Greenwich House Music School, 46 Barrow St., 242-4770; for the Kaye Playhouse, Hunter College, Park Ave. at 68th St., 772-4448; and for Merkin Concert Hall, 129 W. 67th St., 362-8719.)

OPERA

Metropolitan Opera—**LE NOZZE DI FIGARO**, with Renée Fleming, Marie McLaughlin, Susanne Mentzer, Dwayne Croft, and James Morris; conducted by Julius Rudel. (Feb. 9 at 8 and Feb. 12 at 1:30.) . . . **LUCIA DI LAMMERMOOR**, with Mariella Devia, Taro Ichihara, Juan Pons, and Jeffrey Wells; Nello Santi. (Feb. 10 at 8.) . . . **DEATH IN VENICE**, a new production of Britten's opera, with Anthony Rolfe Johnson and Thomas Allen; David Atherton. (Feb. 11 and Feb. 15 at 8.) . . . **AIDA**, with Sharon Sweet, Dolora Zajick, Fabio Armiliato, and Juan Pons; John Fiore. (Feb. 12 at 8.) . . . **LA FILLE DU RÉGIMENT**, with Kathleen Battle, Rosalind Elias, Frank Lopardo, and Bruno Praticò, and with Bea Arthur making her Met début (in French) in the non-singing role of the Duchess of Krakenthorp; conducted by Edoardo Müller. (Feb. 14 at 8.) (Metropolitan Opera House.)

"Karna"—A Javanese-style shadow-puppet opera with a plot from the Mahabharata; the libretto and newly composed score (based on classical Javanese and Western musical styles) are by Barbara Benary, who directs members of the New York-based Gamelan Son of Lion. (La Mama Annex, 66 E. 4th St. 475-7710. Feb. 10-13 at 7:30.)

Opéra Français de New York—Presenting a concert performance of Donizetti's "La Favorite," in its original French version. The performers include mezzo-soprano Robynne Redmon, tenor John Fowler, baritone Gordon Hawkins, bass Raymond Aceto, and the Elora Festival Singers, with Yves Abel conducting. (Alice Tully Hall. Feb. 10 at 8.)

American Chamber Opera Company—Presenting a double bill of recent American operas, fully staged: Dominick Argento's "A Waterbird Talk" and (in its New York première) Jorge Martín's "Tobermory" (to a libretto by Andrew Joffe). Douglas Anderson conducts. (Blake School, 45 E. 81st St. Feb. 11-12 at 8. Through Feb. 19. For information about tickets, call 781-0857.)

Opera Orchestra of New York—Eve Queler conducts a concert version of Bellini's "I Capuleti e i Montecchi"; with soprano Mariella Devia, mezzo-soprano Jennifer Larmore, tenor Raúl Giménez, baritone Pietro Spagnoli, and the Concert Chorale of New York. (Carnegie Hall. Feb. 15 at 8.)

ORCHESTRAS AND CHORUSES

New York Philharmonic—Kurt Masur conducts Schnittke's "(K)ein Sommernachtstraum" and the première of his Symphony No. 7, as well as Bach's Third Orchestral Suite and three minuets attributed to Mozart. (Avery Fisher Hall. Feb. 10 and Feb. 12 at 8, and Feb. 15 at 7:30. . . . **NOTE:** Conversations with Mr. Schnittke, open to ticket holders, begin an hour before each concert.)

Tallis Scholars—Peter Phillips directs works by Palestrina—including motets, the six-part "Missa Veni Creator Spiritus," and a "Magnificat Septimi Toni"—as well as the well-known "Miserere" by Gregorio Allegri, one of Palestrina's successors in the Papal Chapel. (Church of St. Mary the Virgin, 145 W. 46th St. 921-2939. Feb. 10 at 8.)

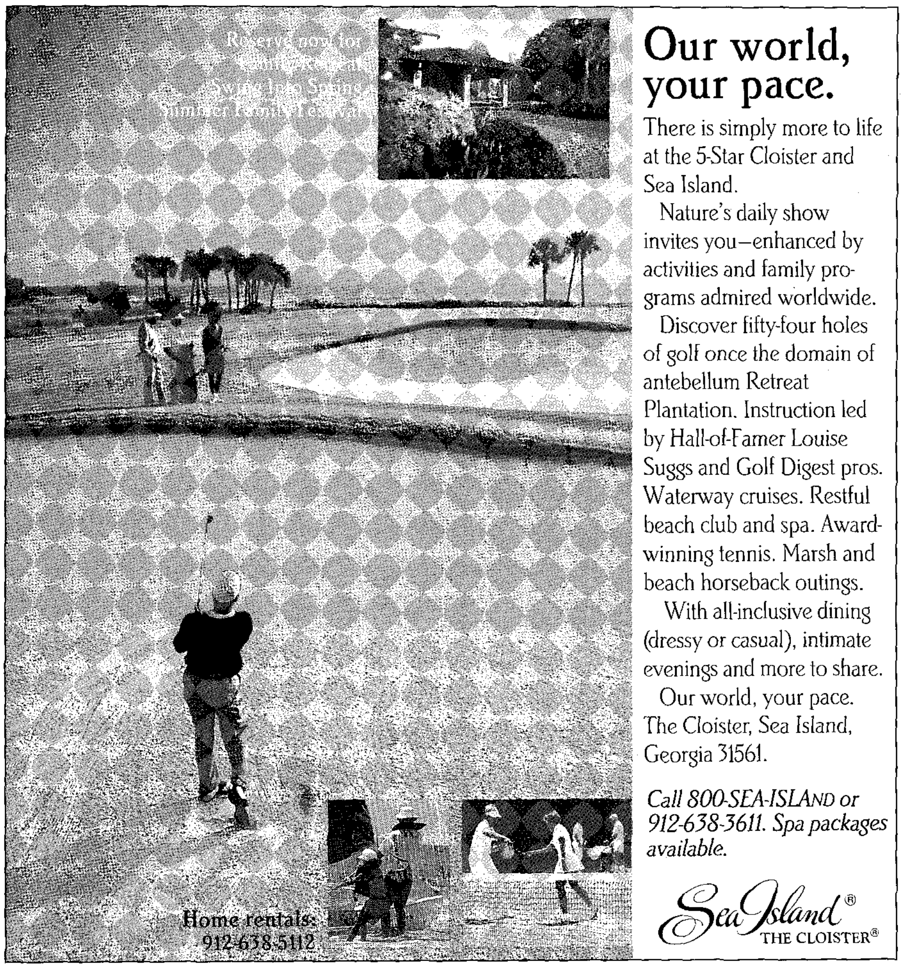
José Carreras—The tenor belts out a tribute to the silver-screen tenor Mario Lanza; with Enrique Ricci conducting an orchestra. (Radio City Music Hall, Sixth Ave. at 50th St. 247-4777. Feb. 10 at 8.)

New York Pops—Skitch Henderson leads festivities *à la française*, including Saint-Saëns' "Carnival of the Animals" (with pianists Charles Wadsworth and Anne-Marie McDermott). (Carnegie Hall. Feb. 11 at 8.)

New Jersey Symphony Orchestra—Zdenek Macal conducts Dvořák's Stabat Mater; with soprano Kaaren Erickson, mezzo-soprano Claudine Carlson, tenor John Aler, bass John Cheek, and the Westminster Symphonic Choir. (Carnegie Hall. Feb. 12 at 8.)

LISTENING BOOTH

Karya: Compositions by I Wayan Sadra (Lyrichord). Even music lovers who have discovered the mystical spell of traditional gamelan music are not likely to think of it as a point of departure for modern musicians. Some Western composers have been inspired by Indonesian music, of course (including Barbara Benary, whose shadow-puppet opera "Karna" is currently playing at La Mama), but what about contemporary Indonesian composers? The first two volumes of Lyrichord's New Music Indonesia series introduced captivating works by eight Sundanese and Central Javanese composers. One of them, I Wayan Sadra (born in Denpasar, Bali), now gets a must-hear disk of his own. He puts gamelan, ketjak, and other Spice Islands sounds to imaginative use, serving up some of the most striking, unanticipated music in recent memory.



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MIRELLA FRENI AND NICOLAI GHIAUROV—The soprano and the bass (sometime collaborators onstage, married in private life) perform arias from Italian and Russian operas; with Roberto Abbado conducting the Orchestra of St. Luke's. (Avery Fisher Hall. Feb. 13 at 3.)

JUPITER SYMPHONY—Jens Nygaard conducts a Handel concerto grosso, Haydn's Symphony No. 2, and Mozart's Piano Concerto in B-Flat Major (K. 595, with Jerome Lowenthal). (Good Shepherd Presbyterian Church, 152 W. 66th St. Feb. 14 at 2 and 8. For information about tickets, call 799-1259.)

YOUNG CONCERT ARTISTS—The organization presents three of its protégés: Graham Scott (performing Mozart's C-Major Piano Concerto, K. 467); violinist Scott Yoo (playing Prokofiev's Violin Concerto No. 2); and soprano Kyoko Saito (singing orchestral songs by Duparc, Delibes, and Alfred Bachelet). Heiichiro Ohyama conducts the New York Chamber Symphony. (92nd Street Y, Lexington Ave. at 92nd St. 996-1100. Feb. 15 at 8.)

RECITALS

ANDREI GAVRILOV—The pianist performs Schubert's Four Impromptus (D. 935), Ravel's "Gaspard de la Nuit" (which, on his recent recording for Deutsche Grammophon, confirms memories of a pianistic style that weds delicacy to power), and Prokofiev's Sonata No. 8. (Carnegie Hall. Feb. 9 at 8.)

GUARNERI QUARTET—Performing Haydn's G-Major Quartet (Op. 76, No. 1), Mendelssohn's F-Minor Quartet (Op. 80), and John Harbison's "The Rewaking" (with the assistance of soprano Benita Valente). (Alice Tully Hall. Feb. 9 at 8.)

THOMAS TROTTER—The organist performs a program for those who like to hear all the stops put to use, including works by Mozart, Ives, Widor, Messiaen—and his own transcription of Wagner's "Ride of the Valkyries." (Church of St. Ignatius Loyola, Park Ave. at 84th St. 288-2520. Feb. 9 at 8.)

FESTIVAL CHAMBER MUSIC SOCIETY—Performing Haydn's "Gypsy" Piano Trio, Prokofiev's Cello Sonata, and Brahms' Horn Trio. (Merkin Concert Hall. Feb. 9 at 8.)

BARGEMUSIC—An all-Schubert concert that includes his Piano Trio in E-Flat Major (D. 929), with pianist Edward Auer, violinist Mark Peskanov, and cellist Ronald Thomas. (Fulton Ferry Landing, Brooklyn. 1-718 624-4061. Feb. 10 at 7:30 and Feb. 13 at 4; the Sunday event is a candlelit dinner-concert.)

BALTIMORE CONSORT—Early music for adults only; bawdy ballads with lurid lyrics, plus more innocent Renaissance love songs. (Kaye Playhouse. Feb. 10 at 8.)

DAVID SOYER AND SEYMOUR LIPKIN—The cellist and the pianist perform sonatas by Mendelssohn (his Second), Debussy, and Rachmaninoff. (Metropolitan Museum, Fifth Ave. at 83rd St. 570-3949. Feb. 11 at 8.)

QUARTET SINE NOMINE—In its New York début, the Swiss foursome plays string quartets by Mozart (K. 458, the "Hunt"), Michel Hostettler (his First), and Brahms (his Second). (Weill Recital Hall. Feb. 11 at 8.)

ENSEMBLE FOR EARLY MUSIC—Frederick Renz leads his group in a program of medieval Iberian works on the theme of love and devotion. (Cathedral of St. John the Divine, Amsterdam Ave. at 112th St. Feb. 12 at 8 and Feb. 13 at 3. For information about tickets, call 749-6600.)

SHOSTAKOVICH STRING QUARTET—The Russian foursome performs quartets by Borodin (his First), Shostakovich (his Eleventh), and Rachmaninoff (the second of his two unfinished efforts in the genre). (Town Hall, 123 W. 43rd St. Feb. 13 at 2. For information about tickets, call 586-4680.)

THE MUSIC PROJECT—The group plays compositions by Roussel, Poulenc, Haydn, and Charles Martin Loeffler. (Weill Recital Hall. Feb. 13 at 2.)

NEW YORK PHILHARMONIC ENSEMBLES—Members of the orchestra perform chamber music by three second-tier masters: Moritz Moszkowski, Franz Berwald, and Anton Arensky. (Merkin Concert Hall. Feb. 13 at 3.)

LEONTOVYCH STRING QUARTET—The Kiev-based ensemble performs quartets by Shostakovich (his Eighth), Haydn (the "Lark"), and Barber. (St. Paul's Chapel, Broadway at Fulton St. 602-0873. Feb. 13 at 4.)

HANS PETER BLOCHWITZ—In his New York début recital, the German tenor performs lieder by Schubert, Schumann, Brahms, and Britten; with pianist Eric Schneider. (Frick Collection, 1 E. 70th St. 288-0700. Feb. 13 at 5.)

SALON SOIRÉE—The O'Brien/Cinelli Guitar Duo plays works by Ferdinando Carulli and Joseph Kasper Mertz; violinist Eric Grossman plays Bach's D-Minor Chaconne and (with pianist Ilan Rechtman) Beethoven's Sonata No. 10. (Hotel Wales, Madison Ave. at 92nd St. Feb. 13 at 6 and 8. Admission is free, but call 876-6000 to reserve a seat.)

GOLIARD CHAMBER ENSEMBLE—Presenting two piano trios—Augusta Read Thomas's "Angel Chant" and Beethoven's "Archduke" Trio—and Poulenc's "Fiançailles pour Rire" (with soprano Barbara Shirvis and pianist Brian Zeger). (Merkin Concert Hall. Feb. 13 at 7:30.)

NEW YORK CONCERT SINGERS QUARTET—An hour of vocal chamber music of a romantic persuasion, by Brahms, Gershwin, and Schumann, plus selections from Walt Disney films. (Merkin Concert Hall. Feb. 14 at 7.)

HELEN DONATH—Soprano, performing love songs by Schubert, Brahms, Pfitzner, and Strauss; assisted by her husband, the pianist Klaus Donath. (Walter Reade Theatre, 165 W. 65th St., plaza level. Feb. 14 at 7:30. For information about tickets, call 875-5050.)

CHAMBER SAMPLER—Flutist Carol Wincenc, harpist Nancy Allen, clarinettist Todd Levy, pianist Stephen Gosling, and the Orion String Quartet perform chamber music by Bartók, Ibert, Ravel, Fritz Kreisler (his String Quartet), Jennifer Higdon (a première), and Paul Schoenfield (his "Slovakian Children's Songs"). (Kaye Playhouse. Feb. 14 at 8. . . . **NOTE**: Mr. Levy will perform a free

EINAT PELED

The Tallis Scholars at the Church of St. Mary the Virgin.

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Photo: Terry O'Neill

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MUSIC—Cont'd

hour-long solo recital that includes Ferdinand David's "Introduction, Theme and Variations" and a new work by Deborah Drattell, beginning at 6.)

Brentano String Quartet—Performing a quartet of quartets, by Berg, Seymour Shifrin (his Fifth), Babbitt (the New York première of his Sixth), and Beethoven (in F Major, Op. 135). (Merkin Concert Hall. Feb. 15 at 8.)

Partita Chamber Ensemble—Performing a Bach trio sonata, Schnittke's Septet (1982), and Brahms' Clarinet Quintet. (Kaye Playhouse. Feb. 15 at 8.)

Christopher Oldfather and Jeanne Golan—The pianists collaborate on a program of works by John Adams (his "Phrygian Gates"), Ligeti, Nancarrow, Ben Yarmolinsky, and Tom Cipullo. (Greenwich House Music School. Feb. 15 at 8. Tickets at the door on the night of the concert.)

Single Composer Concerts—Feb. 9 at 8: Works by the late Robert Savage. (Greenwich House Music School. No tickets necessary.) . . . ¶ Feb. 10 at 8: Works by Chester Biscardi. (Greenwich House Music School. Tickets at the door on the night of the concert.) . . . ¶ Feb. 12 at 8: Music by Carolyn Steinberg. (Mannes College of Music, 150 W. 85th St. No tickets necessary.) . . . ¶ Feb. 15 at 8: A ninetieth-birthday tribute to Goffredo Petrassi. (CAMI Hall, 165 W. 57th St. For information about tickets, call 362-5138.)

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SUSAN COPEN OKEN

FOR KIDS

(A list of activities for children and their parents or other adults.)

Dramatics—You can catch Willy Wonka and crew in the New York Youth Theatre production of "Charlie and the Chocolate Factory." (422 W. 57th St. 315-1737. Feb. 9-11 at 6, Feb. 12 at 2 and 6, and Feb. 13 at 2. Through Feb. 20.)

"Down Hearted Blues"—Mary Bond Davis portrays the jazz singer Bessie Smith in a new musical. Recommended ages: fourteen to eighteen. (Westbeth Theatre Center, 151 Bank St. 245-4680. Feb. 12 at 1.)

Year of the Dog—Feb. 12 at the Children's Museum of Manhattan is given over to a celebration of the Chinese New Year, with Peking Opera-style face painting (at 1), Chinese-calligraphy lessons (at 2 and 4), and a ribbon-dance performance (at 3). (212 W. 83rd St. 721-1223.)

"Kids Care"—A benefit concert of music and dance by young performers from Broadway and Off Broadway shows, TV, and the movies. With Daisy Eagan, Danny Gerard, and the National Dance Institute, among many others. (Tribeca Performing Arts Center, 199 Chambers St. Feb. 13 at 6:30. For information about tickets, call 840-0770.)

ABOVE AND BEYOND

Snoot Doggy Dog—It's a dog's dog's dog's world at the hundred and eighteenth annual Westminster Kennel Club Dog Show: shorthairs, longhairs, wrinkly silent types, *ankle-biters who yip, and, of course, the trusty* St. Bernards. In addition to best-of-breed, the twenty-five hundred participating canines will be narrowed down to seven, from which best-in-show will be chosen on the night of the fifteenth. (Madison Square Garden. 465-6000. Feb. 14-15, from 8:30 A.M. to 11 P.M.)

Have a Heart—"Say it with flowers, say it with mink, but never, never say it with ink"—especially when there are so many opportunities to let others say it for you this Valentine's Day. Feb. 9 at 6:30: Selections from "The Oxford Book of Modern Fairy Tales" will be read by Ivy Austin, among others. (Symphony Space, Broadway at 95th St. 864-5400.) . . . ¶ Feb. 11 at 9: "All the Loves We Lost." Performance art, poetry, and music. (Exit Art/The First World, entrance on 88 Crosby St. Tickets at the door on the night of the event.) . . . ¶ Feb. 13 at 2: "An Ode to St. Valentine" will include romantic verse by Shakespeare, Edna St. Vincent Millay, and other amorous poets, and Renaissance ballads and love songs from the Civil War era. (Old Merchant's House Museum, 29 E. 4th St. Tickets at the door on the day of the event.) . . . ¶ Feb. 14 at 7: Downtown love at the Poetry Project. (St. Mark's In-the-Bouwerie, Second Ave. at 10th St. Tickets at the door on the night of the event.) . . . ¶ Feb. 14 at 8: "Love & Hard Times." Thoughts about love during the Depression, with selections from Dashiell Hammett and Nathanael West, among others. (Town Hall, 123 W. 43rd St. 840-2824.) . . . ¶ "Words of Love." Readings by Paul Auster, Jeffrey Eugenides, and Mary Morris, among others. (Montauk Club, 25 Eighth Ave., Brooklyn. For information about tickets, call 1-718 783-3075.)

. . . Beyond Words—Feb. 12 at 3: Adventure on a Shoestring will lead a tour called "Big Apple Love Affairs," visiting the haunts of such famous lovers as Liz and Dick, Ferdinand and Imelda Marcos, and others. For more information, call 265-2663. . . . ¶ Feb. 13 at 1: The Brooklyn Botanic Garden is offering a tour, "Love Life of Plants," and tunes, "Jazz for Lovers." (Brooklyn Botanic Garden, 1000 Washington Ave., near Grand Army Plaza. No tickets necessary.)

Gung Hay Fat Choy—Welcome in the Year of the Dog in Chinatown on Feb. 10, the eve of the Chinese New Year. A parade of lion and dragon dancers will leave at noon from the corner of Mott and Canal Sts. (The lunar year 4692 officially begins at midnight.) The celebration continues for ten days with Chinese opera and other events at the Chinese Community Center's auditorium. (62 Mott St. Feb. 12-20 at 2. No tickets necessary.) . . . ¶ The Asian American Arts Centre has an exhibit titled "Ghosts and Deities, Prints and Papercuts." (26 Bowery. Mondays through Fridays, from 11 to 6. Through Feb. 28. No tickets necessary.)

Black History Month—The celebration of black culture and history continues. Feb. 12 at 1: John Edward Hasse, author of "Beyond Category: The Life and Genius of Duke Ellington," will deliver a lecture on the composer and musician. . . . Feb. 12 at 3:30 and Feb. 13 at 2: Bernice Johnson Reagon, the founder of the a-cappella group Sweet Honey in the Rock, will perform and talk about spirituals, work songs, and the blues. (Museum of the City of New York, Fifth Ave. at 104th St. Tickets at the door on the days of the events.) . . . ¶ Feb. 13 at 2: The Brooklyn Historical Society will present an African-American Southern quilting workshop. (128 Pierrepont St. Admission is free, but call 1-718 624-0890 for a reservation.)

Readings—Feb. 10 at 7: As part of the Poetry Society of America's "Festival of New Poets," Lynne McMahon and Cynthia Zarin, among others, will read from their own work. (Brother Synagogue, 28 Gramercy Park S. Tickets at the door on the evening of the reading.) . . . ¶ Feb. 11 at 7: Jamaica Kincaid will read from her fiction. (Vanderbilt Hall, New York University, 40 Washington Square S., at Macdougal St. No tickets necessary.) . . . ¶ Feb. 14 at 7:30: Maxine Clair and Lewis Nordan will read from their fiction. (Manhattan Theatre Club, at City Center, 131 W. 55th St. 645-5848.) . . . ¶ Feb. 15 at 7:30: The Japan scholar Donald Keene will read from his memoir, "On Familiar Terms." (Books & Co., 939 Madison Ave., at 74th St. No tickets necessary.)

Talks—Feb. 13 at 6:30: Adam Gopnik and Arthur C. Danto will conduct "A Conversation on the Death of the Museum Audience." (Whitney Museum of American Art, Madison at 75th St. 606-0211.) . . . ¶ Feb. 14 at 7:15: Colette Avital, Consul-General of Israel in New York, and Hasan Abdel Rahman, chief representative of the P.L.O. in the United States, will talk about peace in the Middle East. (Park Avenue Synagogue, Madison Ave. at 87th St. No tickets necessary.) . . . ¶ Feb. 14 at 7:30: Anna Quindlen and Frank Rich will talk about their careers at the *Times*. (St. Luke's School, 487 Hudson St., at Grove St. 924-5960.)

Walks & Tours—Feb. 12 at 11: Eye on Art Tours will visit galleries along Madison Ave. For more information, call 877-5117. . . . ¶ Feb. 12 at noon: A culinary tour of lower Manhattan with Big Onion Walking Tours. For more information, call 439-1090.

SPORTS

HOME TEAMS

Knicks—Vs. the Golden State Warriors, Feb. 10 at 7:30.

Nets—Vs. the Cleveland Cavaliers, Feb. 9. . . . ¶ Vs. the Knicks, Feb. 15. (Game time, 7:30.)

Rangers—Vs. the Quebec Nordiques, Feb. 11 at 7:30.

Islanders—Vs. the Florida Panthers, Feb. 12 at 7:10. . . . ¶ Vs. the Tampa Bay Lightning, Feb. 15 at 7:40.

Devils—Vs. the Vancouver Canucks, Feb. 10 at 7:35.

(The Knicks and the Rangers play at Madison Square Garden, 465-6000; the Nets and the Devils at the Meadowlands Arena, 1-201 935-3900; and the Islanders at the Nassau Coliseum, 1-516 794-9300.)

EAST SIDE

Angelika Film Center, 18 W. Houston St. (995-2000)
Theatre 1: "The Piano" (†).
Theatre 2: A program of short films from "The 24th International Tournée of Animation."
Theatre 3: Through Feb. 10: "Farewell My Concubine" (†). From Feb. 11: "The Cement Garden" (†).
Theatre 4: "Faraway, So Close" (directed by Wim Wenders; in German), with Otto Sander.
Theatre 5: "The Snapper" (†).
Theatre 6: "Naked" (†).

Little Theatre, Public Theatre, 425 Lafayette St. (598-7171)
Through Feb. 10: "Recollections of the Yellow House" (1989, João Cesar Monteiro; in Portuguese).
Feb. 11-13: "The Stranger's Return" (1933, King Vidor), with Lionel Barrymore; and "An American Romance" (1944, Vidor), with Brian Donlevy.
Feb. 14: Theatre closed.
Feb. 15: "The Stranger's Return"; and "The Big Parade" (1925, King Vidor), with John Gilbert.

Movieland 8th Street Triplex, 36 E. 8th. (477-6600)
Theatre 1: "Mrs. Doubtfire" (†).
Theatre 2: "Ace Ventura: Pet Detective" (Tom Shadyac), with Jim Carrey.
Theatre 3: "Romeo Is Bleeding" (Peter Medak), with Gary Oldman and Lena Olin.

Village Theatre VII, 3rd Ave. at 11th. (982-0400)
Theatre 1: "The Remains of the Day" (†).
Theatre 2: "Gunmen" (Deran Sarafian), with Mario Van Peebles and Christopher Lambert.
Theatre 3: "Philadelphia" (†).
Theatre 4: "Body Snatchers" (Abel Ferrara).
Theatre 5: "I'll Do Anything" (James L. Brooks), with Nick Nolte.
Theatre 6: "Intersection" (†).
Theatre 7: "What's Eating Gilbert Grape" (†).

Cinema Village, 22 E. 12th. (924-3363)
"Aileen Wuornos: The Selling of a Serial Killer" (Nick Broomfield), a documentary.

Village East Cinemas, 2nd Ave. at 12th. (529-6799)
Theatre 1: "Blink" (†).
Theatre 2: "Blink" (†).
Theatre 3: "Short Cuts" (Robert Altman).
Theatre 4: "The Summer House" (Waris Hussein).
Theatre 5: "Cabin Boy" (Adam Resnick).
Theatre 6: "My Father, the Hero" (Steve Miner), with Gérard Depardieu.
Theatre 7: "Fiorile" (†).

19th Street East 6, B'way at 19th. (260-8000)
Theatre 1: "The Piano" (†).
Theatre 2: "Philadelphia" (†).
Theatre 3: "My Father, the Hero" (Steve Miner), with Gérard Depardieu and Katherine Heigl.
Theatre 4: "Blink" (†).
Theatre 5: "Intersection" (†).
Theatre 6: "Romeo Is Bleeding" (Peter Medak), with Gary Oldman and Lena Olin.

Murray Hill Cinemas, 160 E. 34th. (689-6548)
Theatre 1: "Grumpy Old Men" (†).
Theatre 2: "Blink" (†).
Theatre 3: "House Party 3" (Eric Meza), with Christopher Reid and Christopher Martin.
Theatre 4: "My Father, the Hero" (Steve Miner), with Gérard Depardieu.

34th Street Showplace, 238 E. 34th. (532-5544)
Theatre 1: "The Pelican Brief" (Alan J. Pakula), with Julia Roberts and Denzel Washington.
Theatre 2: "Gunmen" (Deran Sarafian), with Mario Van Peebles and Christopher Lambert.
Theatre 3: "Intersection" (†).

34th St. East, 241 E. 34th. (683-0255)
Through Feb. 10: "Beethoven's 2nd" (Rod Daniel); and "Strictly Ballroom" (Baz Luhrmann).
From Feb. 11: "The Getaway" (Roger Donaldson).

Eastside Playhouse, 3rd Ave. at 55th. (755-3020)
"Farewell My Concubine" (†).

Sutton 1 and 2, 3rd Ave. at 57th. (759-1411)
Theatre 1: "Body Snatchers" (Abel Ferrara).
Theatre 2: "Iron Will" (Charles Haid), with Mackenzie Astin; and "Golden Gate" (†).

Gotham Cinema, 3rd Ave. at 58th. (759-2262)
"Mrs. Doubtfire" (†).

Plaza, 42 E. 58th. (355-3320)
"What's Eating Gilbert Grape" (†).

THE MOVIES

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
13	14	15	9	10	11	12

FILMS ACCOMPANIED BY A DAGGER ARE DESCRIBED IN "MOVIES IN BRIEF," STARTING ON PAGE 29.

Manhattan Twin, 3rd Ave. at 59th. (935-6420)
Theatre 1: "Grumpy Old Men" (†).
Theatre 2: Through Feb. 10: "Gunmen" (Deran Sarafian). From Feb. 11: "The Getaway" (Roger Donaldson).

59th Street East Cinema, 239 E. 59th. (759-4630)
"Beethoven's 2nd" (Rod Daniel); and "A Perfect World" (Clint Eastwood).

Baronet and Coronet, 3rd Ave. at 59th. (355-1663)
Theatre 1: "Six Degrees of Separation" (Fred Schepisi), with Stockard Channing, Will Smith, and Donald Sutherland.
Theatre 2: "I'll Do Anything" (James L. Brooks), with Nick Nolte.

Cinema I, Cinema II, and Cinema 3rd Avenue, 3rd Ave. at 60th. (753-6022)
Theatre 1: "My Father, the Hero" (Steve Miner), with Gérard Depardieu.
Theatre 2: "Blink" (†).
Theatre 3: "Short Cuts" (Robert Altman).

First & 62nd Cinemas, 400 E. 62nd. (752-4600)
Theatre 1: "In the Name of the Father" (†).
Theatre 2: "Schindler's List" (†).
Theatre 3: "Schindler's List" (†).
Theatre 4: "Intersection" (†).
Theatre 5: "In the Name of the Father" (†).
Theatre 6: "The Piano" (†).

Gemini 1 and 2, 2nd Ave. at 64th. (832-1670)
Theatre 1: Through Feb. 10: "Car 54, Where Are You?" (Bill Fishman). From Feb. 11: "The Fugitive" (†).
Theatre 2: "Philadelphia" (†).

Beekman, 2nd Ave. at 66th. (737-2622)
"Shadowlands" (†).

New York Twin, 2nd Ave. at 67th. (744-7339)
Theatre 1: "The Pelican Brief" (Alan J. Pakula), with Julia Roberts and Denzel Washington.
Theatre 2: "Ace Ventura: Pet Detective" (Tom Shadyac), with Jim Carrey.

68th St. Playhouse, 3rd Ave. at 68th. (734-0302)
"Naked" (†).

Tower East, 3rd Ave. at 71st. (879-1313)
"Romeo Is Bleeding" (Peter Medak), with Gary Oldman and Lena Olin.

East 85th Street, 1st Ave. at 85th. (249-5100)
"Intersection" (†).

Park & 86th Street Cinemas, 125 E. 86th. (534-1880)
Theatre 1: "Shadowlands" (†).
Theatre 2: "Mrs. Doubtfire" (†).

Orpheum VII, 3rd Ave. at 86th. (876-2400)
Theatre 1: "Blink" (†).
Theatre 2: "Ace Ventura: Pet Detective" (Tom Shadyac), with Jim Carrey.
Theatre 3: "Philadelphia" (†).
Theatre 4: "The Pelican Brief" (Alan J. Pakula), with Julia Roberts and Denzel Washington.
Theatre 5: "I'll Do Anything" (James L. Brooks), with Nick Nolte.
Theatre 6: "Gunmen" (Deran Sarafian), with Mario Van Peebles and Christopher Lambert.
Theatre 7: "Grumpy Old Men" (†).

86th Street East Twin, 3rd Ave. at 86th. (249-1144)
Theatre 1: "House Party 3" (Eric Meza), with Christopher Reid and Christopher Martin.
Theatre 2: "My Father, the Hero" (Steve Miner), with Gérard Depardieu.

WEST SIDE

Film Forum, 209 W. Houston St. (727-8110)
Theatre 1: "Between the Teeth" (directed by David Byrne and David Wild), a documentary.
Theatre 2: See listings under Revival Houses.
Theatre 3: "The War Room" (D. A. Pennebaker and Chris Hegedus), a documentary.

Waverly 1 and 2, 6th Ave. at 3rd. (929-8037)
Theatre 1: Through Feb. 10: "Six Degrees of Separation" (Fred Schepisi). From Feb. 11: "The Getaway" (Roger Donaldson).
Theatre 2: "The Pelican Brief" (Alan J. Pakula), with Julia Roberts and Denzel Washington.

Art Greenwich Twin, Greenwich Ave. at 12th. (929-3350)
Theatre 1: "Beethoven's 2nd" (Rod Daniel); and "Shadowlands" (†).
Theatre 2: "Shadowlands" (†).

Quad Cinema, 34 W. 13th. (255-8800)
Theatre 1: "Paris, France" (Gerard Ciccoritti), with Leslie Hope.
Theatre 2: "The Accompanist" (Claude Miller; in French).
Theatre 3: "Blue" (Krzysztof Kieslowski; in French).
Theatre 4: "Bad Girls" (Amos Kollek), with Kollek.

Chelsea Cinemas, 260 W. 23rd. (691-4744)
Theatre 1: "In the Name of the Father" (†).
Theatre 2: "Ace Ventura: Pet Detective" (Tom Shadyac), with Jim Carrey.
Theatre 3: "In the Name of the Father" (†).
Theatre 4: "Schindler's List" (†).
Theatre 5: "Schindler's List" (†).
Theatre 6: "The Remains of the Day" (†).
Theatre 7: Through Feb. 10: "I'll Do Anything" (James L. Brooks), with Nick Nolte. From Feb. 11: "The Getaway" (Roger Donaldson).
Theatre 8: "Mrs. Doubtfire" (†).
Theatre 9: "Shadowlands" (†).

23rd St. West Triplex, 333 W. 23rd. (989-0060)
Theatre 1: "The Pelican Brief" (Alan J. Pakula), with Julia Roberts and Denzel Washington.
Theatre 2: "Gunmen" (Deran Sarafian), with Mario Van Peebles and Christopher Lambert.
Theatre 3: "Iron Will" (Charles Haid); and "Car 54, Where Are You?" (Bill Fishman), with David Johanson and John C. McGinley.

Guild, 33 W. 50th. (757-2406)
"My Father, the Hero" (Steve Miner), with Gérard Depardieu and Katherine Heigl.

Worldwide Cinemas, 50th St. between 8th and 9th Aves. (246-1583)
Theatre 1: "Strictly Ballroom" (Baz Luhrmann).
Theatre 2: "Short Cuts" (Robert Altman).
Theatre 3: "Heaven and Earth" (Oliver Stone).
Theatre 4: "Farewell My Concubine" (†).
Theatre 5: "Grumpy Old Men" (†).
Theatre 6: "The Age of Innocence" (†).

Ziegfeld, 141 W. 54th. (765-7600)
"I'll Do Anything" (James L. Brooks), with Nick Nolte.

Festival, 6 W. 57th. (307-7856)
"Romeo Is Bleeding" (Peter Medak), with Gary Oldman and Lena Olin.

57th St. Playhouse, 110 W. 57th. (581-7360)
"The Joy Luck Club" (Wayne Wang).

Carnegie Hall Cinemas, 7th Ave. between 56th and 57th. (265-2520)
Theatre 1: "The Summer House" (Waris Hussein).

MOVIE HOUSES–Cont'd

Theatre 2: "Like Water for Chocolate" (Alfonso Arau; a Mexican film, in Spanish).

Angelika 57, 225 W. 57th. (586-1900)
"Aileen Wuornos: The Selling of a Serial Killer" (Nick Broomfield), a documentary.

Paris, 4 W. 58th. (980-5656)
"The Remains of the Day" (†).

Cinema 3, 2 W. 59th. (752-5959)
"The Age of Innocence" (†).

Columbus Circle, B'way at 61st. (247-5070)
"My Father, the Hero" (Steve Miner), with Gérard Depardieu and Katherine Heigl.

62nd & Broadway, 62 W. 62nd. (265-7466)
"Mrs. Doubtfire" (†).

Lincoln Plaza Cinemas, B'way at 63rd. (757-2280)
Theatre 1: "Fiorile" (†).
Theatre 2: "The Scent of Green Papaya" (Tran Anh Hung; in Vietnamese).
Theatre 3: "Blue" (Krzysztof Kieslowski; in French).
Theatre 4: "The Piano" (†).
Theatre 5: "The Snapper" (†).
Theatre 6: "The Accompanist" (Claude Miller; in French).

Regency, B'way at 67th. (724-3700)
"Schindler's List" (†).

84th Street Sixplex, B'way at 84th. (877-3600)
Theatre 1: "Philadelphia" (†).
Theatre 2: "Ace Ventura: Pet Detective" (Tom Shadyac), with Jim Carrey.
Theatre 3: "Gunmen" (Deran Sarafian), with Mario Van Peebles and Christopher Lambert.
Theatre 4: "Blink" (†).
Theatre 5: "Intersection" (†).
Theatre 6: "Romeo Is Bleeding" (Peter Medak), with Gary Oldman and Lena Olin.

Thalia, B'way at 95th. (316-4962)
"Naked" (†).

Metro Cinema 1 and 2, B'way at 99th. (222-1200)
Theatre 1: "Shadowlands" (†).
Theatre 2: "The Pelican Brief" (Alan J. Pakula), with Julia Roberts and Denzel Washington.

Olympia I and II, B'way at 107th. (865-8128)
Theatre 1: "House Party 3" (Eric Meza), with Christopher Reid and Christopher Martin.
Theatre 2: "Beethoven's 2nd" (Rod Daniel), with Charles Grodin; and "Grumpy Old Men" (†).

TIMES SQUARE AREA

Criterion Center, B'way at 44th. (354-0900)
Theatre 1: "Ace Ventura: Pet Detective" (directed by Tom Shadyac), with Jim Carrey.
Theatre 2: Through Feb. 10: "Car 54, Where Are You?" (Bill Fishman). From Feb. 11: "The Fugitive" (†).
Theatre 3: "House Party 3" (Eric Meza), with Christopher Reid and Christopher Martin.
Theatre 4: "Carlito's Way" (Brian De Palma), with Al Pacino and Sean Penn.
Theatre 5: "The Pelican Brief" (Alan J. Pakula), with Julia Roberts and Denzel Washington.
Theatre 6: "Philadelphia" (†).
Theatre 7: "Blink" (†).

Embassy 1, B'way at 46th. (302-0494)
Through Feb. 10: "Tombstone" (George Cosmatos), with Kurt Russell.
From Feb. 11: "Blank Check" (Rupert Wainwright).

Embassy 2, 3, and 4, 7th Ave. at 47th. (730-7262)
Theatre 1: Through Feb. 10: "The Air Up There" (Paul Michael Glaser). From Feb. 11: "My Girl 2" (Howard Zieff).
Theatre 2: "Sister Act 2: Back in the Habit" (Bill Duke), with Whoopi Goldberg.
Theatre 3: Through Feb. 10: "Cabin Boy" (Adam Resnick). From Feb. 11: "Tombstone" (George Cosmatos), with Kurt Russell, Val Kilmer, and Sam Elliott.

Astor Plaza, 44th St. at B'way. (869-8340)
"Intersection" (†).

National Twin, B'way at 44th. (869-0950)
Theatre 1: Through Feb. 10: "Gunmen" (Deran Sarafian), with Mario Van Peebles and Christopher Lambert. From Feb. 11: "The Getaway" (Roger Donaldson).
Theatre 2: "Mrs. Doubtfire" (†).

REVIVAL HOUSES

Film Forum 2, 209 W. Houston St. (727-8110)
Through Feb. 10: "Taxi!" (1932, directed by Roy Del Ruth), with James Cagney and Loretta Young; and "Lawyer Man" (1932, William Dieterle), with William Powell.
Feb. 11-12: "The Mouthpiece" (1932, Elliott Nugent and James Flood); and "Upperworld" (1934, Roy Del Ruth).
Feb. 13: "42nd Street" (1933, Lloyd Bacon); and "Wonder Bar" (1934, Bacon), with Al Jolson.
Feb. 14: Two early films by Yasujiro Ozu: "I Flunked, But . . ." (1930) and "Walk Cheerfully" (1930).
Feb. 15: "Two Seconds" (1932, Mervyn LeRoy) and "The Hatchet Man" (1932, William Wellman), both with Edward G. Robinson.

Theatre 80 St. Marks, 80 St. Marks Pl. (254-7400)
Feb. 9: "A Night at the Opera" (1935, Sam Wood), with the Marx Brothers; and "A Day at the Races" (†).
Feb. 10: "Odd Man Out" (1946, Carol Reed), with James Mason; and "Outcast of the Islands" (†).
Feb. 11-12: "Citizen Kane" (1941, Orson Welles), with Welles; and "The Magnificent Ambersons" (1942, Welles).
Feb. 13: "The Decameron" (1971, Pier Paolo Pasolini; in Italian); and "The Canterbury Tales" (1972, Pasolini; in Italian).
Feb. 14: "Jules and Jim" (1962, François Truffaut; in French) and "The 400 Blows" (1959, Truffaut; in French).
Feb. 15: "Red Desert" (1964, Michelangelo Antonioni; in Italian) and "Blow-Up" (1966, Michelangelo Antonioni).

Opening February 11, Kim Basinger and Alec Baldwin in "The Getaway."

FILM LIBRARIES, ETC.

Museum of Modern Art, Roy and Niuta Titus Theatres, 11 W. 53rd St. (708-9480)—A program of films produced by Gaumont, the French movie studio. Feb. 10 at 2:30 and Feb. 13 at 5: A program of short films directed by Jean Vigo. . . . Feb. 10 at 6: "El Dorado" (1921, Marcel l'Herbier; a French silent film). . . . Feb. 10 at 8: "Daïnah, the Half-Caste" (1931, Jean Grémillon; in French); and "Zero for Conduct" (1933, Vigo; in French). . . . Feb. 11 at 2:30 and Feb. 15 at 6: "Vautrin" (1943, Pierre Billon; in French). . . . Feb. 11 at 6 and Feb. 12 at 1: "5 A.M. Deadline" (1942, Georges Lacombe; in French). . . . Feb. 11 at 8: "La Petite de Montparnasse" (1931, Hanns Schwarz and Max de Vaucorbeil; in French). . . . Feb. 12 at 3: "Back to the Wall" (1957, Edouard Molinaro; in French). . . . Feb. 12 at 5: "Caroline Chérie" (1950, Richard Pottier; in French). . . . Feb. 13 at 2: "A Man Escaped" (1956, Robert Bresson; in French). . . . Feb. 14 at 2:30: "Antoine et Antoinette" (1946, Jacques Becker; in French). . . . Feb. 14 at 6 and Feb. 15 at 2:30: "Rendez-vous with Tomorrow" (1949, Becker; in French). . . . ¶ A program of films from Vietnam. Feb. 11 at 3: "Luck Trier" (1989, Tu Huy). . . . Feb. 11 at 6:30: "The Wild Field" (1979, Hong Sen). . . . Feb. 12 at 2:30: "The Girl on the River" (1987, Dang Nhat Minh). . . . Feb. 12 at 5:30: "The Retired General" (1988, Nguyen Khac Loi). . . . Feb. 13 at 2:30: "Light in Dream" (1987, Do Minh Tuan). . . . Feb. 13 at 5:30: "The Black Cactuses" (1991, Le Dan). . . . Feb. 14 at 3: "Bom, the Fool" (1987, Le Duc Tien). . . . ¶ Feb. 14 at 6:30: A program of films by James Herbert, who will be present. . . . ¶ Feb. 15 at 3 and 6: "The Earth Is Our Mother" (1987) and "The Journey Back" (1993), two documentaries by Peter Elsass.

Walter Reade Theatre, Lincoln Center, 165 W. 65th St., plaza level. (875-5600)—A program of films by Yasujiro Ozu, all in Japanese. Feb. 9 at 2 and 6:30 and Feb. 11 at 4:30 and 9: "Ohayo" (1959). . . . Feb. 9 at 4 and 8:30 and Feb. 10 at 2: "Floating Weeds" (†). . . . Feb. 11 at 2 and 6:30 and Feb. 12 at 6:15: "Late Autumn" (1960). . . . Feb. 12 at 4 and 8:45, Feb. 13 at 6:15, and Feb. 15 at 2: "The End of Summer" (1961). . . . Feb. 13 at 4 and 8:15 and Feb. 15 at 4, 6:15, and 8:30: "An Autumn Afternoon" (1962). . . . ¶ Feb. 12-13 at 2: "Misty" (1961, James B. Clark), with David Ladd.

American Museum of the Moving Image, 35th Ave. at 36th St., Astoria. (1-718 784-0077)—Films by Steven Spielberg. Feb. 12 at 1:30: "Raiders of the Lost Ark" (1981), with Harrison Ford and Karen Allen. . . . ¶ Feb. 12 at 4: A program of independent and experimental films. . . . ¶ Films by, or about, Oscar Micheaux. Feb. 13 at 2: "Midnight Ramble: Oscar Micheaux and the History of Race Movies" (1994). . . . Feb. 13 at 4:30: "The Exile" (1931).

Museum of Television and Radio, 25 W. 52nd St. (621-6800)—Feb. 11 at 6 and Feb. 13 at 2: "Zoo" (1993, Frederick Wiseman).

Florence Gould Hall, 55 E. 59th St. (355-6160)—Feb. 9 at 12:30, 3:15, 6, and 8:45: "La Vie de Bohème" (1993, Aki Kaurismäki; in French).

Japan Society, 333 E. 47th St. (752-0824)—Feb. 11 at 6:30: "The Yakuza" (†).

Anthology Film Archives, 32 Second Ave., at 2nd St. (505-5181)—Feb. 9 at 7: A program of films by Robert Morris and Babette Mangolte. . . . ¶ Feb. 10 at 7 and 9, Feb. 11 at 7, 9, and 11, Feb. 12 at 8 and 10, and Feb. 13 at 7 and 9: "Pull My Daisy" (1959, Robert Frank and Alfred Leslie); and "Shadows" (1961, John Cassavetes). . . . ¶ Feb. 12 at 3 and 5: "Lester Horton: Genius on the Wrong Coast" (1993, Lelia Goldoni). . . . ¶ Feb. 12 at 6: "Nanook of the North" (1921, Robert Flaherty), a documentary. . . . ¶ Feb. 15 at 7 and 9: "Gang of Souls" (1988, Marla Beatty) and "Fried Shoes, Cooked Diamonds" (1978, Costanzo Allione).

ROBERT DEMICHIELL

MOVIES IN BRIEF

FILMS OPENING THIS WEEK

Blank Check—An eleven-year-old boy (Brian Bonsall) gets ahold of a million dollars in laundered money and goes on a spending spree. Then the F.B.I. and the mob come after him. With Miguel Ferrer. Directed by Rupert Wainwright. Opening February 11.

The Cement Garden—Ian McEwan adapted his 1978 first novel. With Charlotte Gainsbourg, Andrew Robertson, and Sinead Cusack. Directed by Andrew Birkin. (See brief review on this page.) Opening February 11.

The Getaway—Walter Hill, who wrote the screenplay for Sam Peckinpah's 1972 film, collaborated with Amy Jones on the script for this remake, directed by Roger Donaldson. Steve McQueen and Ali MacGraw starred in the original; the bank-robbing lovers in this version are Alec Baldwin and Kim Basinger. Both films are based on the novel by Jim Thompson. Opening February 11.

My Girl 2—Vada (Anna Chlumsky), who kissed Macaulay Culkin in "My Girl," is now thirteen, and travels from Pennsylvania to California to learn about the mother she never knew. With Dan Aykroyd, Jamie Lee Curtis, Richard Masur, Austin O'Brien, and Christine Ebersole. Directed by Howard Zieff. Opening February 11.

CURRENT FILMS

(The following notes are by Anthony Lane, Terrence Rafferty, and Michael Sragow. If a movie has been reviewed in The Current Cinema, the date of its review is given.)

The Age of Innocence—Martin Scorsese returns to form with this hectic adaptation of Edith Wharton's novel. Everything looks right, from roast duck to waistcoats, but the movie has no ambitions to be a costume museum; it homes in on the passions that had to be veiled by good manners. As the film begins—a showy, overwhelming scene at the opera—we see Newland Archer (Daniel Day-Lewis) about to announce a perfect match with the young May Welland (Winona Ryder). Such perfection is a prison, with no hope of escape, and the vigorous sadness of Day-Lewis tells the whole story; he will never rebel, but in his eyes you see him wishing he could. Less fruitful is the casting of Michelle Pfeiffer as May's older cousin, the mysterious Countess Olenska, with whom Archer falls hopelessly in love.—A.L. (Reviewed in our issue of 9/13/93.) (Worldwide Cinemas, and Cinema 3.)

Blink—With Madeleine Stowe and Aidan Quinn, directed by Michael Apted. (Reviewed in this issue.) (Village East Cinemas, 19th Street East 6, Murray Hill Cinemas, Cinema II, Orpheum VII, 84th Street Sixplex, and Criterion Center.)

The Cement Garden—It wouldn't be surprising if the British Tourist Board tried to ban this movie; no one who sees it could ever want to go there again. The location scouts did their job all too well and found the most horrible house in England, a concrete cube in a rusty, sweltering wasteland. Inside, things aren't much better: the miserable teen-age Jack (Andrew Robertson) occasionally takes time off from masturbation to look after his ailing mother (Sinead Cusack). When she dies, he and his sister (Charlotte Gainsbourg) cover her in concrete and stash her in the cellar. Still to come: cross-dressing, poor personal hygiene, and a fistful of incest. Ian McEwan has adapted his own novel—still his most vicious and compact—and hardly changed a word, but the spirit has gone out of it. The director, Andrew Birkin, gives no energy to the dereliction, no kick of horror; the movie is drab and deadly from the first scene, and you can't have much reason to carry on watching. Birkin once made a haunting TV series, "The Lost Boys," about J. M. Barrie and the real children behind "Peter Pan"; this is stronger meat by any standards, but somehow less potent in its fantasies of youth. It's solemn, controlled, and oddly unshocking; the one big surprise is Gainsbourg's flawless British accent. Any chance of a remake by Paul Bartel?—A.L. (Angelika Film Center; starting Feb. 11.)

Farewell My Concubine—Chen Kaige's film is a big, eventful historical soap opera of the "Doctor Zhivago" school. The movie follows a pair of male Beijing Opera performers, Cheng Dieyi (Leslie Cheung) and Duan Xiaolou (Zhang Fengyi), from their school days, in the nineteen-twenties and early thirties, to their farewell performance together, in 1977. Chen keeps the action charging forward breathlessly, for more than two and a half hours, and at a certain point you begin to realize that the obvious theatre-versus-life ironies are only a small part of what the movie is about. The real subject is whether it's possible, in times that demand perpetual revolutions in values, to remain true to anyone or anything: an art, an ideal, a friend, a wife, oneself. In Mandarin.—T.R. (10/11/93) (Eastside Playhouse, and Worldwide Cinemas. . . . ¶ Angelika Film Center; through Feb. 10.)

Fiorile—The new movie by Paolo and Vittorio Taviani is a family saga that, according to the filmmakers, is based on legends they heard while they were growing up in Tuscany. The picture, spanning two hundred years, tells the story of the Benedetti (who are sometimes referred to by the locals as the Maledettis). The Benedettis begin as peasants and become wealthy landowners, but their prosperity and power derive from an original sin, committed in the seventeen-nineties, for which future generations have never received full absolution. The screenplay, by the Tavianis and Sandro Petraglia, is constructed as a series of historical tales framed by a contemporary story in which members of the three surviving generations of the Benedettis illustrate, in various ways, the consequences of their blighted family history. The Tavianis mean to follow the course of bad blood as it surges through time, and to make us feel its awful, unstoppable momentum. Although the movie is elegantly made and has moments of great beauty, it somehow falls short of delivering the tremendous emotional impact that it promises. The three legends we're told about the family aren't extraordinary in themselves, and the thematic structure—the whole saga comes down to a parable about love versus greed—is disappointingly banal. With Michael Vartan, Galatea Ranzi, Claudio Bigagli, and Renato Carpentieri. In Italian.—T.R. (2/7/94) (Village East Cinemas, and Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.)

The Fugitive—Harrison Ford plays Dr. Richard Kimble, who is wrongly accused of murdering his wife and sentenced to death. What gives this adaptation of the old TV series its extra kick is the presence of Tommy Lee Jones, as U.S. Deputy Marshal Sam Gerard, hot on Kimble's trail, and enjoying the heat. It's a pleasure to find a thriller fulfilling its duties with such gusto: the emotions ring solid, the script finds time to relax into backchat, and for once the stunts look like acts of desperation rather than shows of prowess. The director is Andrew Davis.—A.L. (8/16/93) (Gemini, and Criterion Center; starting Feb. 11.)

Golden Gate—A political mood piece about an F.B.I. agent (Matt Dillon) who puts away an honorable laundryman from San Francisco's Chinatown during the McCarthy era, develops a mammoth guilty conscience, and years later romances the man's daughter (Joan Chen). The subjects may be the Red scares and the myth of the Yellow Peril, but the dialogue and narration are deep purple. Playwright David Henry Hwang ("M. Butterfly") stuffs his first original movie script with symbolism, mysticism, and abrupt intrusions of fantasy; he wants the movie to depict Dillon's spiritual cleansing and rebirth, but the character has no life in the first place. John Madden's broad-stroke direction gives stylization a bad name. With Bruno Kirby, Stan Egi, Tzi Ma, and Teri Polo.—M.S. (Sutton.)

Grumpy Old Men—A sentimental comedy in the feuding-friends genre of "The Sunshine Boys," set in a wintry Minnesota village where the main pastime is ice fishing. The bickering next-door neighbors are a retired high-school history teacher (Jack Lemmon) and a retired TV repairman (Walter Matthau) who jockey for the attention of a flighty, voluptuous widow (Ann-Margret, as a former Berkeley prof!) who moves in across the street. Matthau and Lemmon have a few exuberant moments, but the laugh lines are quaint vulgarities and put-downs, and the triangle is hopelessly tricked up (Ann-Margret as a sexy-angelic lover of silly "mature" men is especially forced). Donald Petrie directed Mark Steven Johnson's script.—M.S. (Murray Hill Cinemas, Manhattan Twin, Orpheum VII, Worldwide Cinemas, and Olympia.)

Intersection—What's romantic about a weepie with a completely self-absorbed hero? In this roadkill of a movie, Richard Gere plays a successful Vancouver architect whose recent life flashes—slowly—before his (and our) eyes during a car crash. He's caught between a life-affirming magazine columnist (Lolita Davidovich) and his wife (Sharon Stone), a cool number who's also his partner in an architectural firm and the mother of his thirteen-year-old daughter (Jenny Morrison). The women do what they can, but Gere, trying to be heartfelt, ends up as dithery and solipsistic as Woody Allen. (Maybe it's the dialogue—Allen's old collaborator Marshall Brickman co-wrote the script with David Rayfiel.) The director, Mark Rydell, handles the time jumps so poorly that it seems as if Davidovich were watching Gere's flashbacks. The film's cloistered upper-class ambience operates as emotional insulation; here lovers don't "meet cute"—they meet rich.—M.S. (Village Theatre VII, 19th Street East 6, 34th Street Showplace, First & 62nd Cinemas, East 85th Street, 84th Street Sixplex, and Astor Plaza.)

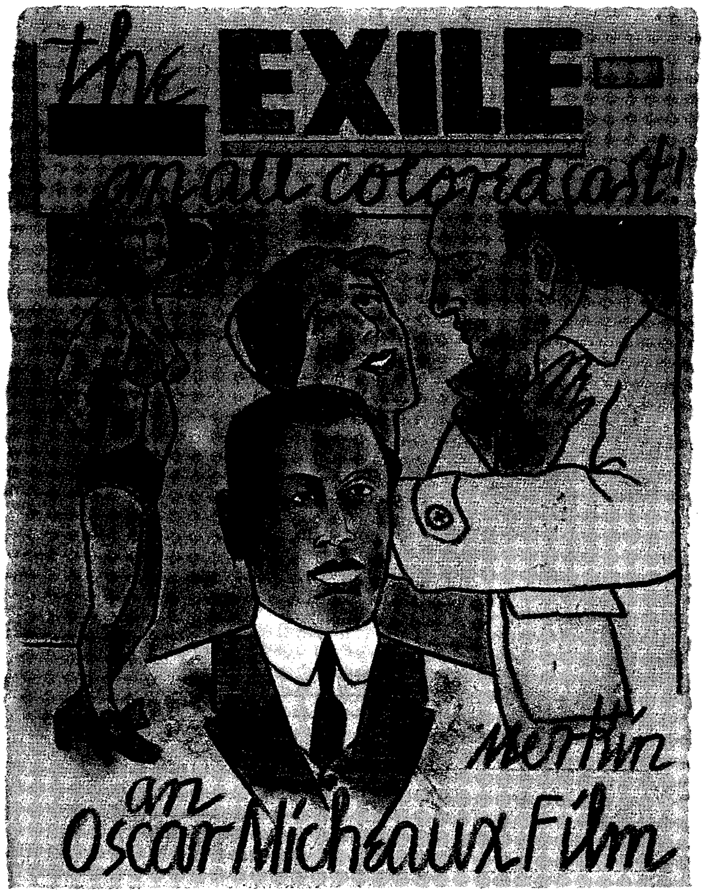
In the Name of the Father—Jim Sheridan's ragged, fascinating new movie is based on the autobiography of Gerry Conlon, a Belfast Catholic who spent nearly fifteen years in British prisons for a crime he didn't commit. Conlon (Daniel Day-Lewis) and three friends were accused of participating in the 1974 bombing of a pub near London, in which five people were killed; the only evidence against Conlon was his own confession, extracted from him by means of a brutal police interrogation. When Sheridan and his co-screenwriter, Terry George, try to function as historians, the movie feels shaky. But when Gerry and his father (Pete Postlethwaite)—who has been convicted on a different charge—get to prison, the filmmakers begin to explore their real theme, which is the intimate emotional consequences of oppression and prejudice. The picture turns into a kind of stylized morality play about the right and the wrong ways for Irishmen to respond to distorted portraits of their character, and it's terrifically effective. Day-Lewis, Postlethwaite, and Don Baker (playing a chillingly self-possessed I.R.A. man) are superb. Also with Emma Thompson and Corin Redgrave.—T.R. (1/24/94) (First & 62nd Cinemas, and Chelsea Cinemas.)

Mrs. Doubtfire—Robin Williams impersonates a stocky, middle-aged female housekeeper, and he's too inventive an actor not to get a few gigantic laughs out of the stunt. But the picture as a whole isn't in the class of "Tootsie" and "Some Like It Hot," mostly because its premise is sentimental, not cynical: Williams's character, a divorced man, becomes Mrs. Doubtfire in order to get around a court-ordered custody arrangement and spend more time with his adorable children. Lessons are learned, loved ones are

IN BRIEF–*Cont'd*

hugged, and personal growth is achieved—as usual, at the expense of comedy. Some, apparently including Williams, like it warm and cuddly, too. Nobody's perfect. Directed—with a very heavy hand—by Chris Columbus.—T.R. (Movieland 8th Street Triplex, Gotham Cinema, Park & 86th Street Cinemas, Chelsea Cinemas, 62nd & Broadway, and National Twin.)

Naked—A pitch-black comedy, written and directed by Mike Leigh, in which the unstoppable Johnny (David Thewlis) comes to London and makes life difficult for everyone he meets: new girlfriends, old girlfriends, a drunken Scotsman on the street. The smell of misanthropy, which wafts from one Leigh picture to the next, hangs more heavily than ever in the air, and the movie is badly unbalanced by the presence of a token yuppie—not a character at all, just a lazy exercise in caricature. But Thewlis saves the day: the Johnny he creates is lean and hungry, foulmouthed but erudite, his low expectations crossed with high spirits. He's one of the most compelling rebels in modern cinema.—A.L. (1/17/94) (Angelika Film Center, 68th St. Playhouse, and Thalia.)



At the American Museum of the Moving Image, a series of films by Oscar Micheaux, including "The Exile."

RICHARD MERKIN

Philadelphia—Tom Hanks plays a lawyer dismissed from his firm, apparently for incompetence, but really because he has AIDS. Enter Denzel Washington as a personal-injury attorney—relaxed, witty, and homophobic, but prepared to fight for justice. The result is an unorthodox blend of courtroom drama and old-style weepie, and somehow it comes off. With Jonathan Demme in charge there's a guarantee of taste and skill—if anything, the movie is too optimistic, convinced that everyone in America can be won round to its own standards of tolerance. Of course it should stand up for gay rights, but do we also need a speech about how wonderful lawyers are? Fortunately, this preachiness never swamps the picture, thanks largely to spirited playing from Tom Hanks, who looks full of life right up to the end. The movie is affecting, sometimes silly, but determined to take risks.—A.L. (12/27/93-1/3/94) (Village Theatre VII, 19th Street East 6, Gemini, Orpheum VII, 84th Street Sixplex, and Criterion Center.)

The Piano—Sometime in the last century, a Scottish mute called Ada (Holly Hunter) travels to New Zealand with her beloved piano and her daughter Flora (Anna Paquin). She is engaged to Stewart (Sam Neill), but it is his right-hand man, Baines (Harvey Keitel), who becomes the focus of her interest. He buys the piano, and gives her a chance to win it back: an erotic agreement that gathers intensity and drives the film onward to its gasping conclusion. The writer and director, Jane Campion, has turned her native New Zealand, with its desolate beaches and writhing forests, into a potent backdrop; the rain and mud make the love story look like trench warfare—you come away from the movie battered and amazed. It's almost too wrought and compressed for its own good, but the performances breathe it full of life. Hunter, especially, gives a fiery portrait of a rebellious Victorian spirit.—A.L. (11/29/93) (Angelika Film Center, 19th Street East 6, First & 62nd Cinemas, and Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.)

The Remains of the Day—Anthony Hopkins plays Stevens, a butler who has given long and faithful service at Darlington Hall and maintained his emotional temperature at absolute zero. This has cost him dearly: first, he failed to see that his master (James Fox) was dangerously bent on appeasement with the Germans in the nineteen-thirties; and, second, he refused to accept, or even acknowledge, the love offered to him by the housekeeper (Emma Thompson). Adapted by Ruth Prawer Jhabvala from the novel by Kazuo Ishiguro, this Merchant-Ivory production strains so hard to portray dignified restraint that it almost seizes up with good manners. This is especially unfair to Thompson, who is forced to smother her naturally high spirits.—A.L. (11/15/93) (Village Theatre VII, Chelsea Cinemas, and Paris.)

Schindler's List—The story of Oskar Schindler (Liam Neeson), a dashing and resourceful German Catholic businessman who saved over a thousand Polish Jews from almost certain annihilation by the Nazis, is extraordinary even by the standards of Holocaust literature. Steven Spielberg's film, adapted by Steven Zaillian from the 1982 book by Thomas Keneally, runs better than three hours and doesn't seem a minute too long. Spielberg respects the essential mystery of the protagonist's heroism, and uses his prodigious skills with an intensity that he hasn't shown in a long time: he captures *images of experiences* that most of us thought we would never see represented adequately on the screen. This is by far the finest, fullest dramatic (i.e. nondocumentary) film ever made about the Holocaust. Along with Neeson, who is brilliant, the standouts in the large cast are Ralph Fiennes, Ben Kingsley.—T.R. (12/20/93) (First & 62nd Cinemas, Chelsea Cinemas, and Regency.)

Shadowlands—Richard Attenborough's film chronicles the relationship between the British writer C. S. Lewis (played by Anthony Hopkins) and an American woman named Joy Davidman Gresham (Debra Winger). The screenplay, by William Nicholson (adapted from his earlier television and stage versions of the story), initially emphasizes the comic incongruity of the love affair: Lewis, a shy and scholarly bachelor in his fifties, suddenly falls hard for a blunt, outspoken woman who doesn't *quite* fit the profile of an Oxford professor's wife. But the real drama is in the poignant brevity of the relationship, which is cut short by Joy's death from cancer. The picture isn't actually very good; it's just a tearjerker with clumsy interpolations of theology. (Lewis, a prominent Christian thinker, is shown delivering lectures on the spiritual implications of happiness and pain.) Hopkins and Winger are fascinating to watch, though. Winger—who is, as always, vivid, honest, and intuitive—gives the whole idea of Americanness an astonishing radiance. And Hopkins, realizing that he has to put up some real emotional capital or else get blown off the screen, comes through with the most impassioned acting of his career.—T.R. (Beekman, Park & 86th Street Cinemas, Art Greenwich Twin, Chelsea Cinemas, and Metro Cinema.)

The Snapper—A return trip to the Dublin of "The Commitments," and every bit as welcome as the earlier film. The Curley family is in trouble: young Sharon (Tina Kellegher) is going to have a snapper—a baby, that is, conceived after a drunken fumble on a car hood. Sharon knows who the father is, but she won't let on to her friends, let alone to her father (Colm Meaney). It sounds like a drab little tale, but in the hands of director Stephen Frears it becomes a headlong tumble into good humor; he seems as fascinated by his characters as the family is by the new arrival, and the camera scuttles around, tolerantly picking up details. The script is adapted by Roddy Doyle from his own novel, which guarantees a string of firecracker jokes, caustic but never cruel; look out for the bemused parents discovering the joy of sex.—A.L. (Angelika Film Center, and Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.)

What's Eating Gilbert Grape—The small-town setting is Endora, Iowa; the hero (Johnny Depp) is a grocery clerk who can't endure it. He and his two sisters (Laura Harrington and Mary Kate Schellhardt) are stuck there while they take care of a morbidly obese mother who won't leave the house (Darlene Cates) and a mentally challenged brother named Arnie (Leonardo DiCaprio). The director, Lasse Hallström, aims for a tragicomic fable that says a rut is as deep as you make it; he tries to be sensitive without being boring. But the film is still implicitly condescending since almost all the characters (including the afflicted ones) function as tests of Gilbert's patience. John C. Reilly and Crispin Glover (as Gilbert's buddies) contribute affable comic turns, but the exuberant, inventive DiCaprio is the only one who transcends the flatness of the storytelling. With Juliette Lewis as a travelling girl who lifts Gilbert out of his rut, and Mary Steenburgen as an itchy housewife who gives him sex. Peter Hedges adapted his own novel.—M.S. (Village Theatre VII, and Plaza.)

REVIVALS

(The following notes are by Pauline Kael and Michael Sragow.)

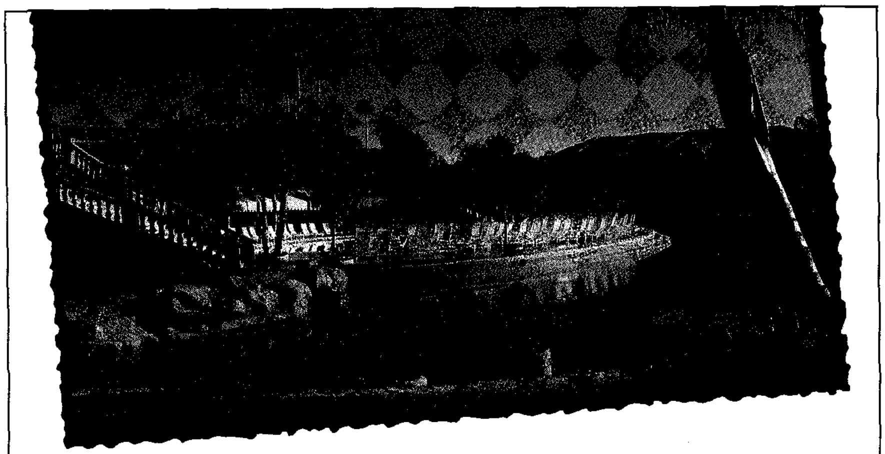
A Day at the Races (1937)—The Marx Brothers in a sort of morning-after to "A Night at the Opera." It has something to do with a sanatorium, a group of bankers, a blond siren, and a steeplechase. Groucho is Hugo Z.

Hackenbush, a horse doctor posing as a fashionable neurologist. ("Either this man is dead or my watch has stopped.") He shuffles off with the picture. (Groucho's rendezvous with a big, beautiful blonde—Esther Muir—is interrupted by paperhangers. "This is the worst insult I've ever had in my life," she announces. "Well, it's only eight o'clock," replies Groucho.) The total effect is that of highly satisfying derangement; it's not up to "Opera" or "Duck Soup," but it's better than just about everything else they did—though "A Night in Casablanca" has its moments. The Brothers are fortified by Margaret Dumont; the cast includes Maureen O'Sullivan, Allan Jones, Douglass Dumbrille, and Sig Rumann; the teen-age Dorothy Dandridge may be glimpsed among the kids in the "All God's Chillun Got Rhythm" number, and the singer is Ivie Anderson. Directed by Sam Wood.—P.K. (Theatre 80 St. Marks; Feb. 9.)

FLOATING WEEDS (1959)—It's probably the only Yasujiro Ozu film that evokes comparisons to Fellini—near the start, travelling players parade through a seaside village in the South of Japan while a circuslike tune plays on the soundtrack. The ensuing story pivots on the emotional entanglements of the troupe leader, who fathered a son in the town years before. But the highlight of the movie is the color. Ozu said that cinematographer Kazuo Miyagawa taught him what a color film should be, and today's directors and cameramen could still learn his lessons. The vermillions, blues, and greens are saturated with emotion; Miyagawa's control is so subtle that he's able to supply a visual tingle with a couple of hot-pink Popsicles. Screenplay by Ozu and Kogo Noda; with Ganjiro Nakamura, Haruko Sugimura, and Machiko Kyo. In Japanese.—M.S. (Walter Reade Theatre; Feb. 9-10.)

AN OUTCAST OF THE ISLANDS (1951)—A marvellous film (drawn from Joseph Conrad's work) that relatively few people have seen. It's probably the only movie that has ever attempted to deal in a complex way with the subject of the civilized man's ambivalence about the savage. It also contains some of the most remarkable sequences ever filmed by the English director Carol Reed; it's an uneven movie, but with splendid moments throughout. Trevor Howard is superb as Willems, who makes himself an outcast first through contemptible irresponsibility and through betrayal of those who trust him, and finally and hopelessly when, against his will, he is attracted to the silent, primitive girl, the terrifying Aissa (played by Kerima). Willems is wrong in almost everything he does, but he represents a gesture toward life; his enemy, Almayer (Robert Morley), is so horribly, pathetically stuffy that his family unit (with Wendy Hiller as his wife and Annabel Morley as his child) is absurdly, painfully funny.—P.K. (Theatre 80 St. Marks; Feb. 10.)

THE YAKUZA (1975)—An attempt to sell a romantic view of gangsterism in an exotic setting. The yakuza are Japanese mobsters, and one of the items of their "code" is that you can show penitence for an offense against the mob chieftain by slicing off your little finger and presenting it to him. Robert Mitchum plays an American private eye who goes to Japan to rescue an American girl kidnapped by yakuza; he enlists the aid of a "retired" yakuza, a master-teacher of swordsmanship (Takakura Ken, or, if you prefer, Ken Takakura), and they fight side by side, the gun and the sword. At the end, Mitchum realizes that he has offended the swordsman and commits his act of penance. This is a swaggeringly meretricious fairy tale, overloaded with exposition, and solemn when it means to be Orientally inscrutable. Richard Jordan, as Mitchum's bodyguard, gives the film its only fresh, unexpected moments. The director, Sydney Pollack, doesn't seem to understand how action-film mechanisms operate. The script, by Paul Schrader, from Leonard Schrader's story, was given a rewrite by Robert Towne. With Brian Keith and Eiji Okada.—P.K. (Japan Society; Feb. 11.)



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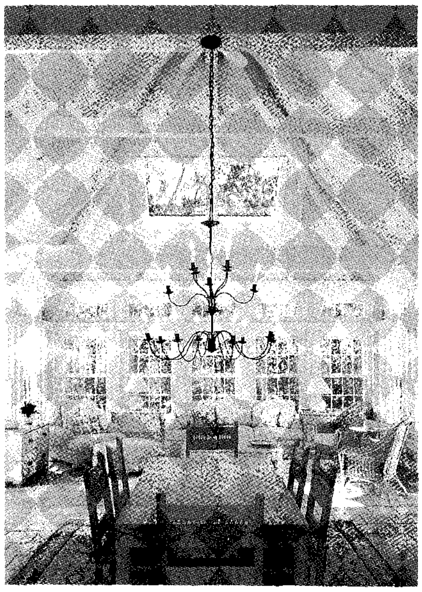

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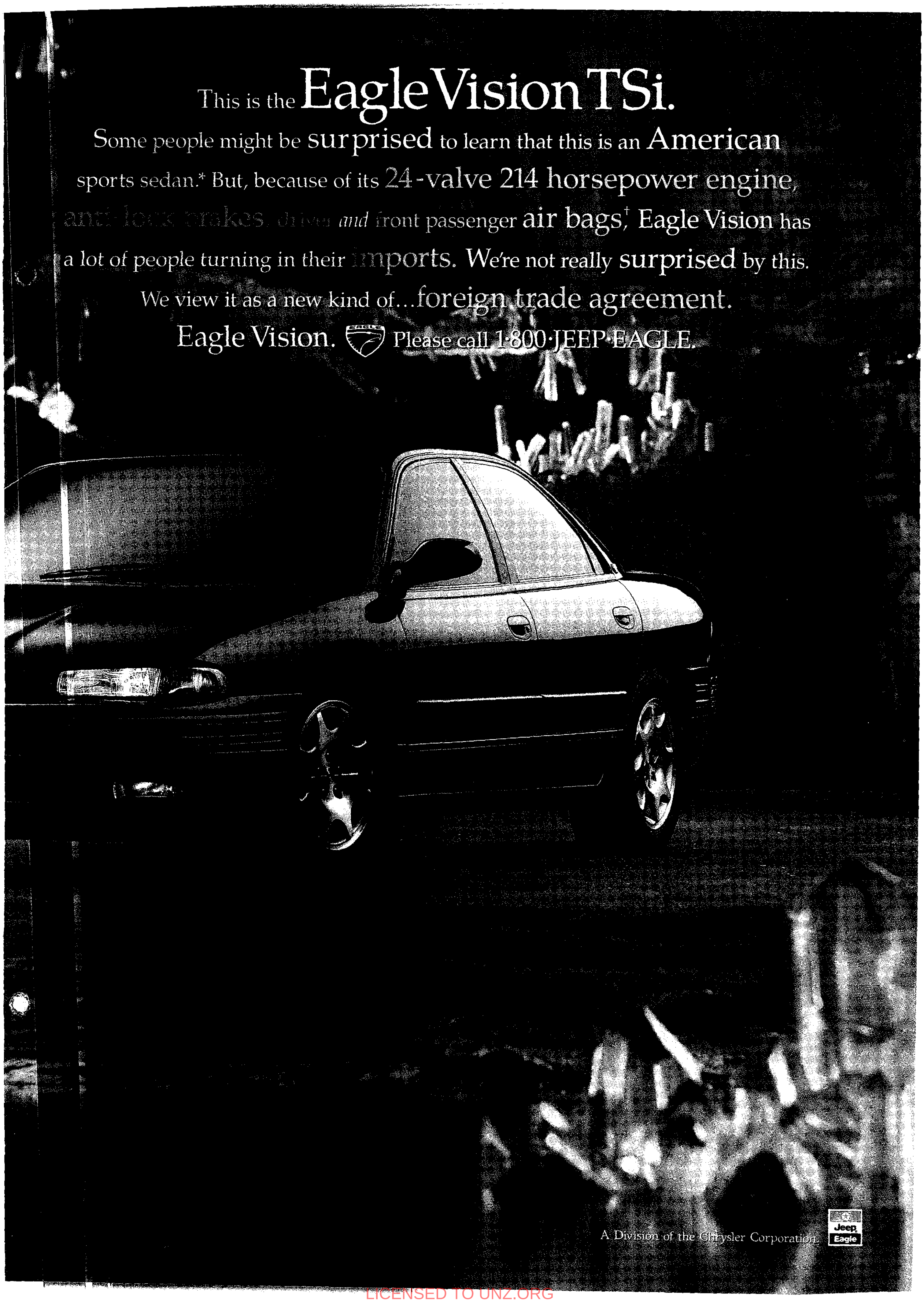

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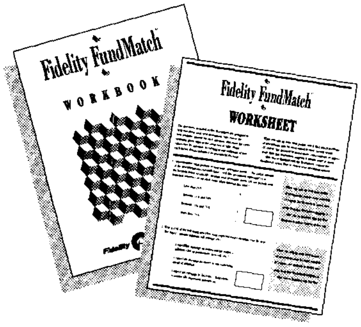

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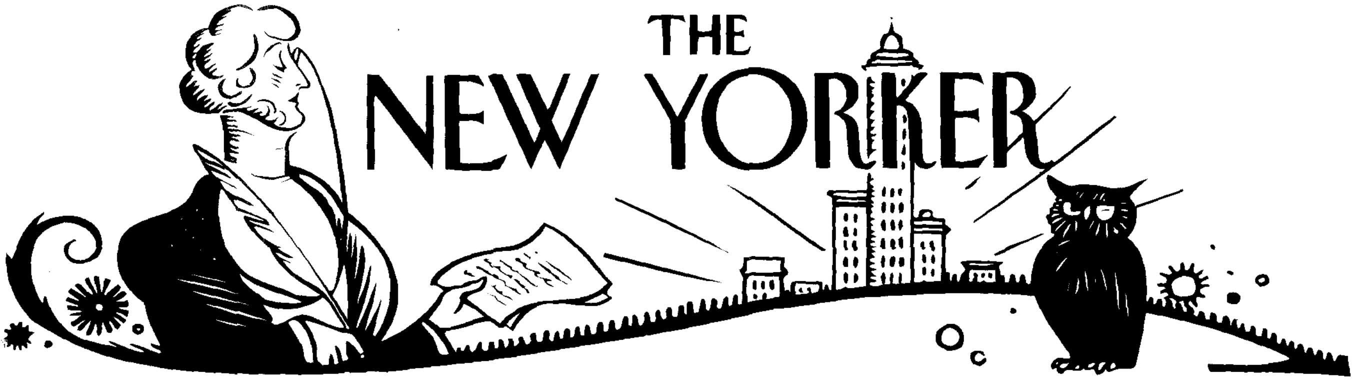


THE TALK OF THE TOWN

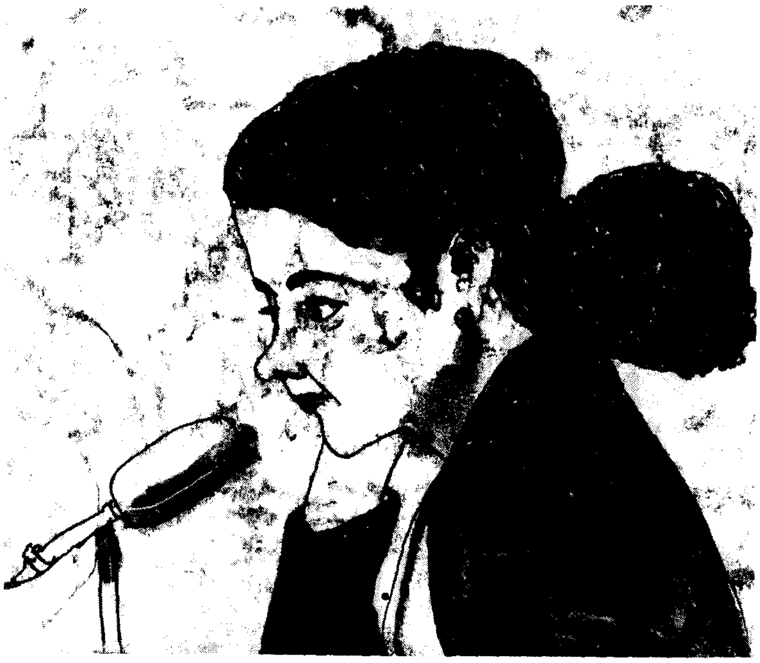
SEVENTEEN, WITH ACCESS

Andrea Schlesinger is a seventeen-year-old senior at Brooklyn's distinguished Edward R. Murrow High School, but most weekday afternoons she can be found at the headquarters of the city's Board of Education, in downtown Brooklyn, where she has a chair, a desk, a phone, and what her classmates might call (outside the classroom) a major agenda kind of thing. Ms. Schlesinger is a member of the Board of Ed, the only member who actually attends a public school—who takes classes in a building where condoms are available from the "resource room," and who, between classes, might walk down a hallway where some kid is packing a piece. Her official title is Student Advisory Member of the Board; her position, whose term is a full year, is a nonvoting (and nonpaying) one. And her role, as she sees it, is to make sure that, whatever stand the board is taking on an issue, the members know as much as they can about where students stand on it—and to make sure, too, that wherever students stand on an issue, they know they have someone on the board standing up for them.

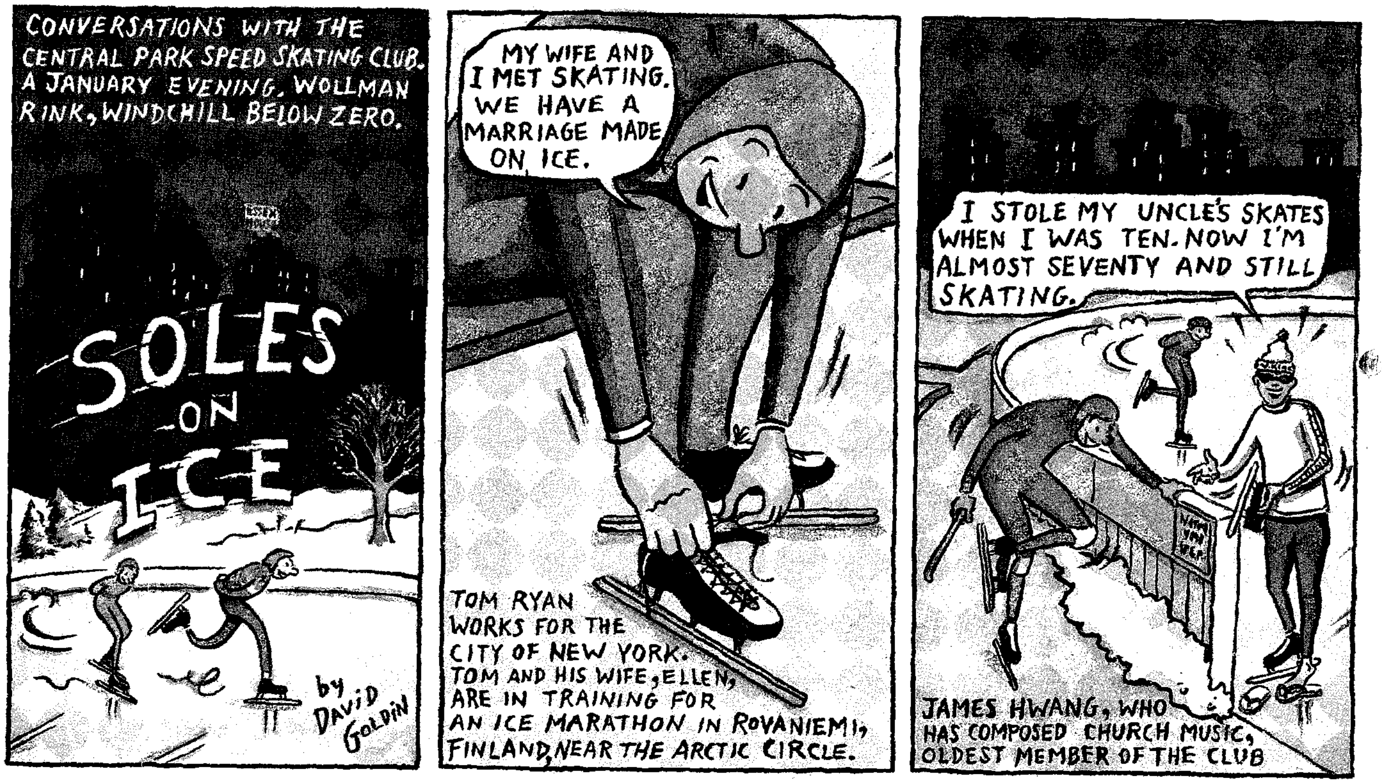
Ms. Schlesinger is serious, charming, casual, confident; that is, she's seventeen and smart. The other evening, she was wearing Doc Martens boots and baggy khakis, and she'd tucked her dark curly hair under a funky brown wool motoring cap, which she didn't take off even as she sat in a conference room not far from the office of Board President Carol Gresser. She is an only child, she said, and she has a Yorkshire terrier named Snippet. She lives in Sea Gate, a private residential community at the tip of Coney Island. Her father works in computers. Her mother—"What's the P.C. term?" Ms. Schlesinger asked. "Homemaker? House manager?" Then she said, "My mother's this little Dominican woman who's very feisty, so she's always taught me to stand up for what you believe in."

To become the board's Student Advisory Member, Ms. Schlesinger had to win a series of elections, beginning with a vote at her own school and concluding with a vote of the members of the Schools Chancellor's Student Advisory Council. Among her qualifications: alternate to the 1991-92 Student Advisory Member (the city's first); member, Mayor Dinkins' Youth Advisory Council; president, Murrow student government. She recalled that when she initially heard about the position she thought, Ding, ding—this is what I was meant to do. She explained, "I mean, this is a pretty cool job, obviously. I get to eat breakfast with Gloria Steinem and have correspondence going with Mayor Giuliani—it's exciting stuff, amazing access. I got over having a business card and being on the stationery a while ago, but in the beginning that was pretty cool, too."

Ms. Schlesinger has visited a dozen or so schools around the city over the past months, listening to her fellow-students. What she is hearing right now is, not surprisingly, that violence in and around the schools is the big problem, and she is at work on a project that she believes can help students become part of the solution. "I'm trying to get students at every school to work with school safety officers, to establish a partnership," she said. As she sees the situation, students are the ones who have the information that might prevent violence. "Students know when gangs are going to be out there



ILLUSTRATIONS BY ROBERT ANDREW PARKER


CONVERSATIONS WITH THE CENTRAL PARK SPEED SKATING CLUB. A JANUARY EVENING, WOLLMAN RINK, WINDCHILL BELOW ZERO.
SOLES ON ICE
by DAVID GOLDIN
MY WIFE AND I MET SKATING. WE HAVE A MARRIAGE MADE ON ICE.
TOM RYAN WORKS FOR THE CITY OF NEW YORK. TOM AND HIS WIFE, ELLEN, ARE IN TRAINING FOR AN ICE MARATHON IN ROVANIEMI, FINLAND, NEAR THE ARCTIC CIRCLE.
I STOLE MY UNCLE'S SKATES WHEN I WAS TEN. NOW I'M ALMOST SEVENTY AND STILL SKATING.
JAMES HWANG, WHO HAS COMPOSED CHURCH MUSIC, OLDEST MEMBER OF THE CLUB

shooting, they know what areas at what times are most dangerous, so just ask them already."

Concerning the School Board issue that has received the most press attention of late—whether parents should have the right to "opt out" of the system's condom-availability program for their children—Ms. Schlesinger said that the focus of the debate should be less on the availability of condoms and more on the opportunity for students to speak with someone at school about contraception. "The real resource is guidance," she said. "I'm concerned that they"—the students—"ask that trained adult there in the resource room the question they need the answer to." For Ms. Schlesinger, the most painful part of the process of resolving the issue was not the board's vote last month to approve parental opt-out, although she opposed it, but the public meeting held before the vote, during which she listened for hours as parents stood before microphones "categorizing my generation as either (a) irresponsible or (b) sex fiends that need to be calmed down."

Since Ms. Schlesinger already has enough credits to graduate, she is taking only a few advanced-placement classes this semester, all in the morning, and she generally makes it to the board offices by noon and stays until six or seven. She acknowledged that occasionally her, well, adolescence creates a certain uncomfortableness with some of her colleagues on the board. "Tact is something I'm working on," she said, taking a tug at her cap's brim. She went on to say, "I like it here. Everybody kind of gives me mommying, like"—she dropped her voice to sound stern—" '*What are you eating?*' "

And when it's finally time to put the board issues aside and blow steam?

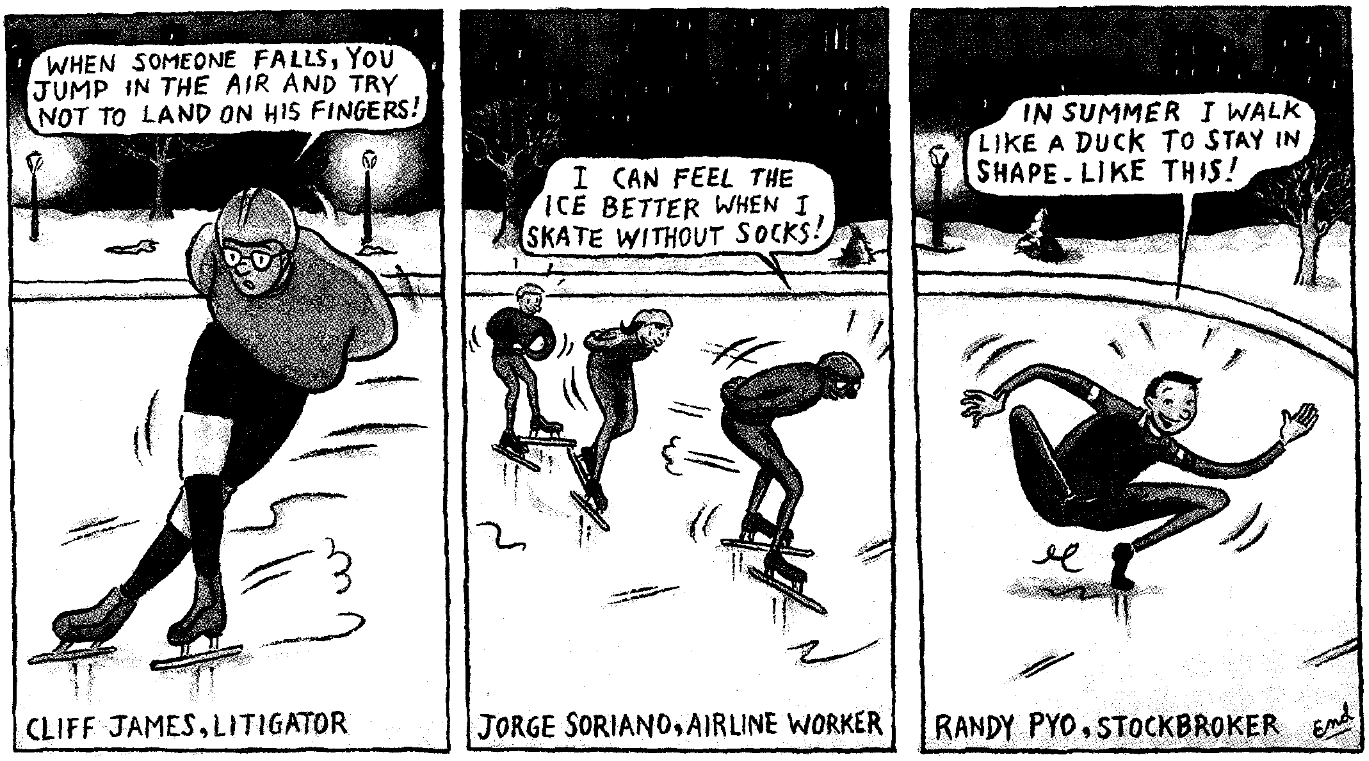
"We've been doing the poetry-reading thing—going to the Lower East Side and checking out readings and poetry slams, and all," she said. "I used to drive into the city and then drive home, but I'm not allowed to do that anymore since my car got towed." She gently struck the arm of her chair with her fist. "I *knew* you couldn't park on Bleecker."

BRUCE NAUMAN: THEME AND MEANING (AND SLEIGHT OF HAND)

On the morning of January 21st, the day that Bruce Nauman's twenty-fifth-anniversary show opened at the Leo Castelli Gallery on West Broadway, Bruce and Leo went to the track. In the paddock at Belmont, where there is no racing in winter, they stood and looked at a thoroughbred that belongs to Leo and is named Star Thief, after a painting by James Rosenquist. Later, back at the gallery, as Bruce looked over the installation of his video installation just a few hours before the opening, he announced that the beauty of Leo's horse had absolutely knocked him out.

Nauman, at fifty-two, has the rangy, laconic looks of a cowboy, and horses are a theme in his life. On a ranch near Galisteo, New Mexico, where he and his wife, the painter Susan Rothenberg, live, he has a dozen quarter horses, and he has been teaching himself to train them. Horses are among the things he keeps busy with when he is not making art, or is making art but isn't sure where it is going, or, as in this case, has just finished making art and is waiting to display it.

Themes in Nauman's art are harder to find. He is not a sculptor, exactly, though he does make sculpture, or a video artist, strictly speaking, though he does employ video equipment from time to time in his work. He has also employed neon tubing, barbed wire, fibreglass, and masking tape, among other materials—an assortment of mediums which some critics claim has prevented him from achieving the fame he deserves, and which others say is the chief reason he is perhaps the most influential artist of this not easily


WHEN SOMEONE FALLS, YOU JUMP IN THE AIR AND TRY NOT TO LAND ON HIS FINGERS!
CLIFF JAMES, LITIGATOR
I CAN FEEL THE ICE BETTER WHEN I SKATE WITHOUT SOCKS!
JORGE SORIANO, AIRLINE WORKER
IN SUMMER I WALK LIKE A DUCK TO STAY IN SHAPE. LIKE THIS!
RANDY PYO, STOCKBROKER

definable moment in contemporary art. Words like "dread" and "entrapment" come up a lot when people talk about Nauman's work, and so does the idea of Sartre and "No Exit" (for a while Nauman was making a series of long hallways that led nowhere), but an image that comes up a lot, at least in Nauman's video installations, is that of a clown. His use of clowns has to do with an interest he has long had in masks, and the tension between public and private life, and the idea of taking the familiar and distending, magnifying, and de-contextualizing it, and, by doing so, rendering it completely different. Clowns, he says, are people but not people; stylized versions of figures; abstractions.

Nauman likes the idea of abstracting art from life, but in titles he tends toward the concrete. His anniversary show is called "Falls, Pratfalls, and Sleights of Hand," and that is exactly what the show's centerpiece is: five color videos of clowns and magicians (none in clown or magician getups), which are projected onto the walls, from floor to ceiling, of Castelli's main gallery. Two involve clowns falling (on a banana peel and out of a chair), and three are closeups of sleight of hand (a card trick, the making of a pregnant balloon dog, the rolling of a rubber ball over and between fingers). The videos were shot on super-high-speed videotape and film, and then played back slowly, so that the making of the balloon dog, which in real time took forty-five seconds, here takes fifteen minutes. This has the effect of transforming the trick into a highly stylized dance. The sounds of the performers' actions have been amplified, to match the size of the images and the passage of time, and enormous falling bodies resonate like sonic booms. Whenever a tape runs out it simply starts again, as it will eight hours a day, five days a week, for the next couple of weeks.

Where had all this come from? "The idea," Nauman said slowly, standing amid the video imagery, "was to examine something so closely that you lose the whole point of it and it becomes something else. For example, a card trick becomes not about the trick but about the hands. What's amazing with tricks is that, despite the fact that all the action has been dramatically slowed down, you still can't tell how it's done. The best you can do is figure out *when* something disappears, and maybe *where*, but not how."

At the time he began to work on the piece, he thought the slowing down of time might, in fact, reveal to the viewer how the tricks are done. But the more he worked on it, the better he understood his own intentions. "I realized that *how* wasn't the point," he said. "It's not to tell you what you don't know but to show you another way of looking at what you do know."

Standing in the cavernous gallery, watching acidic greens and reds and blues from video projectors bounce off Nauman's high-domed forehead as he talked, it began to feel as if whoever was talking about time and change and knowing was not actually an artist but, rather, the abstraction of an artist. Huge, disembodied hands gracefully shuffled a deck of cards as a giant dropped languidly through space, and the room took on the soothing, otherworldly atmosphere of a dreamscape. A voice that seemed to be Nauman's was heard to say, "It's probably the prettiest work I've ever done." The voice also revealed, "I fell asleep while editing it."

CHRIS KRESKI IS INTO HIS SEVENTIES

NOSTALGIA isn't what it used to be. Those who grew up in the nineteen-seventies temper reverence for their teen years with a certain snickering. Chris Kreski, who is short and cheery, and is the editorial director of MTV, spent the seventies in Butler, New Jersey. He was sixteen in 1977, and, sitting in his office one morning not long ago, he recalled how he frequented Manhattan discos back then, aflame with night fever. "I had huge hair, and this suit with the major lapels, and an orange Qiana shirt with a *giant* collar," he said. "And I used to wear this little choker chain with my astrological symbol, Leo—poised and ready to pounce—and shoes with heels that were this big." He held his forefinger and thumb a stiletto's length apart.

Kreski remembers the seventies vividly, and out of the cultural vagaries of his adolescence he has built a kind of cottage industry. He collaborated with the actor Barry Williams on "Growing Up Brady: I Was a Teenage Greg," which in 1992 reached No. 2 on the *Times* paperback nonfiction best-seller list. He collaborated next with William Shatner, who played the hyperthespian Captain Kirk on the original "Star Trek." Their book, "Star Trek Memories," recently spent eleven weeks on the *Times* best-seller list, and they are now at work on a follow-up, about the "Star Trek" movies. Kreski may well be the country's leading scholar of seventiesology, a burgeoning discipline whose students spend hours teaching themselves to say "the Bionic Woman paradigm" with a straight face. Like most specialists, Kreski seems particularly intrigued by esoteric discoveries. He brightened when he talked about how "Star Trek" 's creator, Gene Roddenberry, had an affair with Nichelle Nichols, who played Lieutenant Uhura, and how Barry Williams had an offscreen date with his television mom, Florence Henderson. "It's all really spooky stuff," he said donnishly.

The walls of Kreski's office at MTV held a giant pair of undershorts and signed photographs of the Monkees and of Barry White, and fifteen pencils hung from the fibreboard ceiling. He has not put away childish things. He laughed as he recounted his first meeting with Shatner to discuss the "Star Trek" book. "We had lunch at Planet Hollywood, and I was really intimidated," he said. "I was afraid he was going to order me to beam down somewhere. But it turns out Bill is the coolest guy on the planet. We were in one of the private glass-tiled booths for famous people, and the waitresses immediately started bringing all this food in. Then they realized that the food was actually meant for a producer in the next booth. Shatner starts giggling, and decides we should lick our fingers and touch all his food before it gets taken over there." And there was real excitement in Kreski's voice when he brought up the Village People. "They showed up for rehearsal for the MTV Movie Awards last spring, and I was thrilled," Kreski said. "I was standing on the Disney lot with my boss, and, like two idiots, we started running across the parking lot to see them. Like, 'Ooh, I hope it's the same Indian.' "

It hasn't all been groovy. Kreski spoke frankly about his professional disappointments. His collaboration with David Cassidy on "C'mon Get Happy: Fear and Loathing on the Partridge Family Bus" collapsed over "creative differences," and, more recently, he was "crushed" by the news that Mary Tyler Moore was at work—solo—on a book that would encompass her years as the star of "The Mary Tyler Moore Show." "Of all of them, I would have loved to work on Mary's," he said. "That was the big deal, Saturday night at nine, getting out of the bathtub to watch Mary." He laughed. "This fat little eleven-year-old kid rushing out of the tub: 'Oh, look, Rhoda's getting thin.' Man, is this pathetic."

When not adrift in the seventies, Kreski is busy helping to create tomorrow's nostalgia: he writes episodes of "Beavis and Butt-head" for MTV. His three-year-old daughter, Amelia Rose, is hooked on the chuckleheaded duo, he said. "She likes to blow her nose into her hand, like Beavis. But I don't know if I'm going to let her watch much longer, now that she's starting to retain memories of them stealing lawnmowers, or cooking mice and eating them—an episode that her daddy wrote, which makes it particularly bad." Kreski doesn't mind her watching shows from his youth, though. "Right now she's drawn to 'The Brady Bunch,' " he said. "Their wide-eyed optimism is endearing. People all worked together in the seventies, instead of insulting one another."

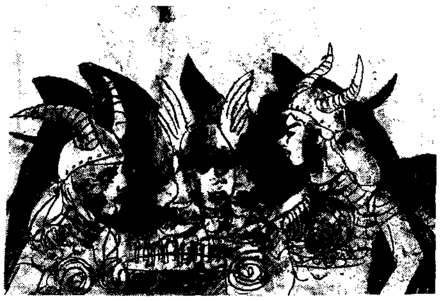
Kreski went on to say that he had only a few more books on the television shows of the seventies in him. "It's not like I'll be stuck forever back then, doing a Thelma book about 'Good Times,' or a 'Jeffersons' one—'Growing Up Ouisie,' " he said. He paused, then added, "Actually, that would be pretty good."

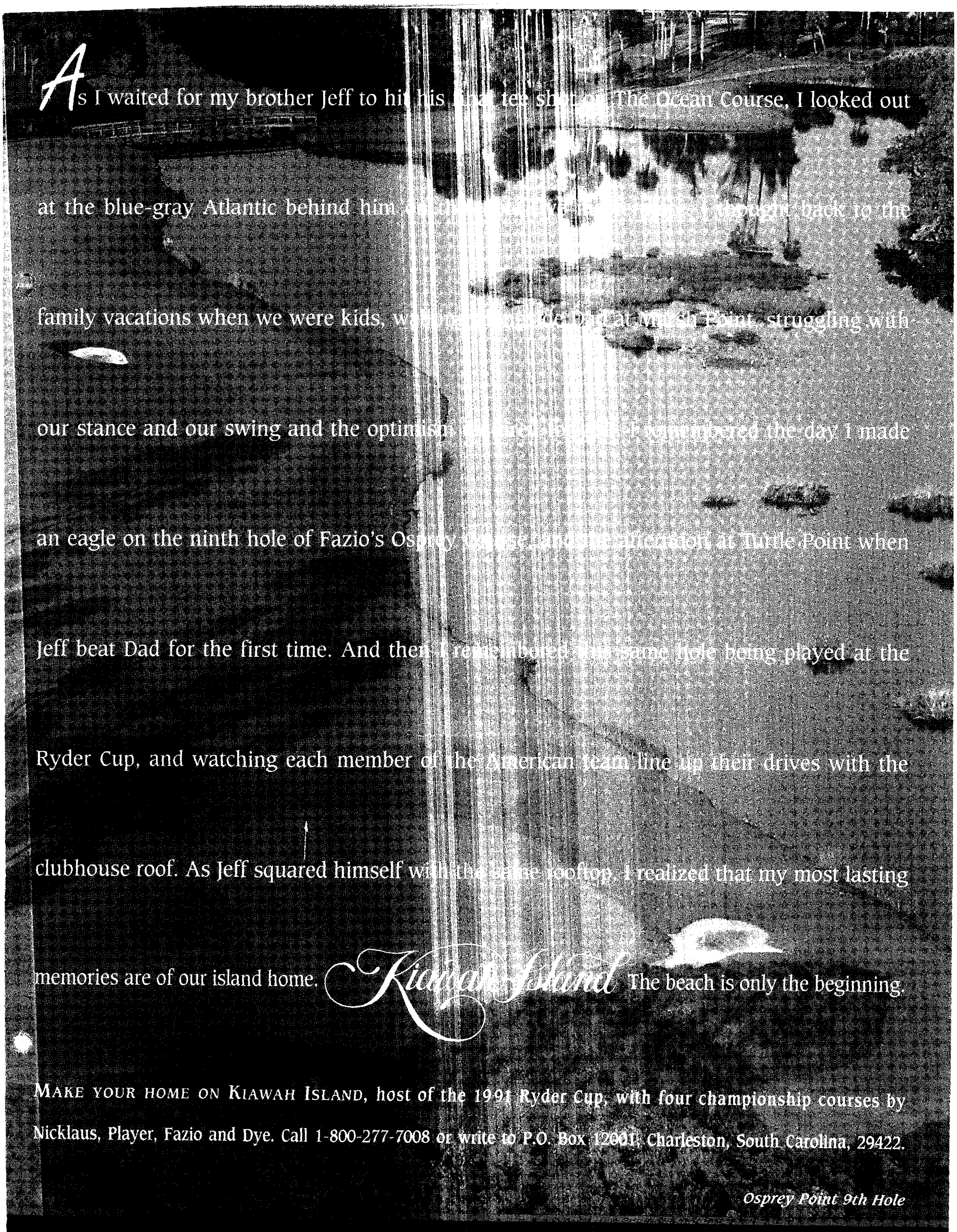
BLOWOUT

WHAT may well be the merriest concert ever given in Carnegie Hall took place on a recent wintry Sunday afternoon, when the Metropolitan Opera diva Marilyn Horne gave herself a sixtieth-birthday party there. She was assisted by an assortment of mettlesome fellow-divas—Frederica von Stade, Helen Donath, Montserrat Caballé, Ruth Ann Swenson, and Renée Fleming—and she and they were accompanied on the piano by the eminent musicians Warren Jones, Martin Katz, Manuel Burgueras, Klaus Donath, and James Levine. What singing! What collisions of divas hugging and kissing and praising one another's talents!

An audience of some three thousand greeted every song on the program with tumultuous clapping of hands, stamping of feet, and cries of "Jackie! Jackie!"—the name by which Horne is known to her friends and fans. Horne is buxom and blond, and her heartiness of manner makes her sound, in conversation, as comfortably down-to-earth as Walter Cronkite. At an adroitly chosen moment, she alluded to the serious side of the occasion: the concert was a benefit to raise money for the newly founded Marilyn Horne Foundation, whose purpose is to encourage the art of vocal recital.

The concert wound up, at a late hour, with performers and audience joining in a heartfelt, if less than lilting, rendition of "Happy birthday, dear Jackie, happy birthday to you!" This was followed by the cutting, in an adjacent reception room, of an immense birthday cake, whose candles, tactfully few in number, the altissima diva extinguished with two mighty chestfuls of breath. ♦





As I waited for my brother Jeff to hit his final tee shot on The Ocean Course, I looked out at the blue-gray Atlantic behind him [illegible] I thought back to the family vacations when we were kids, [illegible] at Marsh Point, struggling with our stance and our swing and the optimism [illegible] I remembered the day I made an eagle on the ninth hole of Fazio's Osprey Course and the afternoon at Turtle Point when Jeff beat Dad for the first time. And then I remembered this same hole being played at the Ryder Cup, and watching each member of the American team line up their drives with the clubhouse roof. As Jeff squared himself with the same rooftop, I realized that my most lasting memories are of our island home. Kiawah Island The beach is only the beginning.

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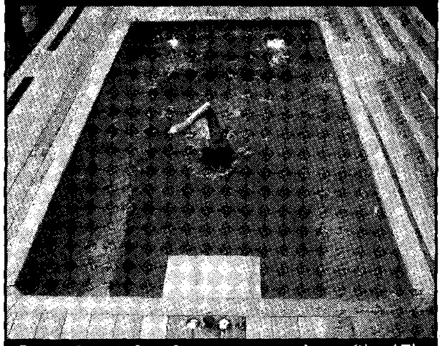

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ANNALS OF COMEDY

IT'S ALBERT

His more famous peers agree that Albert Brooks, now in "I'll Do Anything," is the funniest man in the movies. So why doesn't the public know it?

BY ALISON ROSE

ALBERT BROOKS was at home, he said, sitting on the edge of his bed. I was sitting on my bed at the Regent Beverly Wilshire. It was my last morning in Los Angeles. Monica Johnson, who wrote the movies "Real Life," "Modern Romance," and "Lost in America" with Brooks, had said to *make* him take me "for a spin" in his white Miata. She said, "It's very fast. Wear a scarf." Albert yelled at me now when I suggested the spin. He yelled, "NO MORE SPINS!" There isn't type big enough to show how loud and hardheaded he sounded. Then he said, "I could thrill you so much. I'm tempted to do this for you," and he said he would play me the tape of the last evening of his father's life, when his father died—literally—in front of twelve hundred people at the Friars Club. First, Albert went rummaging around trying to find the tape. He said he hadn't listened to it in years. I could hear him shuffling tapes, dropping them, and humming in a jittery, loud way. He came back on the phone. "I'll go in the other room and sit down at a phone that's more comfortable for me and see if you can hear it," he said. There was a silence. Then he played the tape.

It was a tape of a testimonial dinner for Lucille Ball and Desi Arnaz in November of 1958 at the Beverly Hilton. I heard Art Linkletter reading a telegram to Lucy and Desi from Eddie Cantor. Then Linkletter introduced Albert's father: "A great guy and a fine Friar, Harry Einstein—Parkyakarkus." (In movies and on radio, Albert's father played Eddie Cantor's Greek sidekick; the name is pronounced "Park Your Carcass.") Then Brooks' father was telling a lot of jokes, in what Brooks called his Winston Churchill voice, about "my very dear and very close friends Miss Louise Bowl and Danny Arnaz." The audience was so carried away that finally all I could hear except hilarity was silverware crashing and the Desi Arnaz maniacal Cuban laugh. Brooks got back on the phone, convulsed, and managed to say, "Do you hear Desi laughing?" He turned off the tape and said, "So he walks back to the dais . . . and he puts his head on the table. That's it."

It is quite possible to live in America and not know about Albert Brooks, especially if you didn't see "Broadcast News," in which he plays Holly Hunter's unglamorous suitor—the one who moans "Wouldn't this be a great world if insecurity and desperation made us more attractive?" He has acted in movies by such directors as Martin Scorsese ("Taxi Driver") and James L. Brooks ("Broadcast News" and the newly released "I'll Do Anything"), and has written, directed, and acted in four of his own movies: "Real Life," in 1979; "Modern Romance," in 1981; "Lost in America," in 1985; and "Defending Your Life," in 1991. But none of his own movies were successful in the strictest, commercial sense, and in certain Hollywood circles Brooks is regarded as someone with an unerring instinct for offbeat, unmarketable projects. It would be stretching things to talk about an Albert Brooks "cult," but nevertheless there is a sizable population of Albert Brooks fanatics, who watch his movies over and over again and can quote his early standup routines from memory.

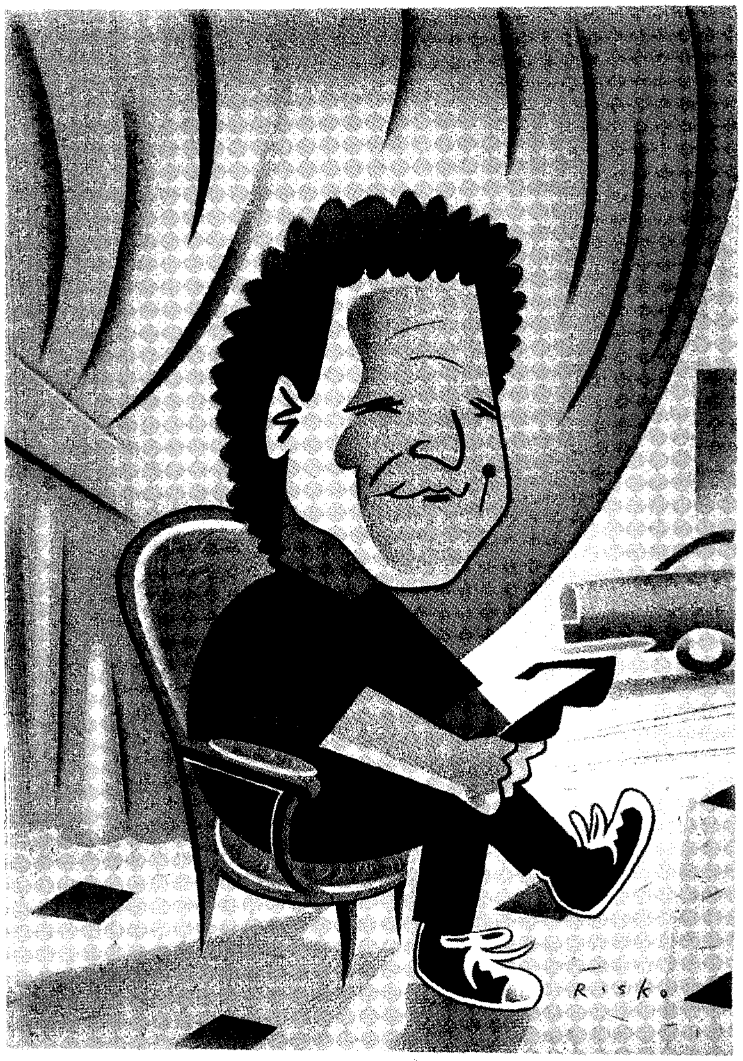
Among his peers, Brooks is an object of veneration that has nothing to do with box-office. Famously funny people speak about him with awe. Steve Martin, who first became an admirer twenty-five years ago, calls Albert Brooks the Richard Feynman of the comedy world, and adds, "He is someone you respect and fear at the same time, because of his brilliance. Fear in the sense you just *know* something's going on there all the time." Charles Grodin worked for Brooks ("for nothing," he says, meaning for scale) in Brooks' first movie, and even read for his part (as established actors generally do not), because, he says, "I wanted to serve him." The director Garry Marshall told me that once, a few years ago, when he was a guest on "Late Night with David Letterman," Letterman had talked to him about Brooks all during a commercial break. "He's above all of us. I mean, he's up there and we're down here when it comes to the real humor," Letterman said. Marshall added, "Some of the public doesn't know it, but we who do this for a living know." Many of those people echo Johnny Carson, who said of Brooks, "I can't wait to see what he does next."

Carl Reiner told me—in startling detail—about a routine Brooks had done thirty years ago, at age sixteen, in the Reiner living room. The routine sounded like the kind of vaudeville inversion that brought Albert Brooks, at twenty-eight, to the notice of "Saturday Night Live." In the routine Reiner remembers, Brooks was an escape artist trying to wriggle loose from a handkerchief laid over his wrists. "Prodigy comedy people are rare," Reiner went on. "You have to be a little older to make people laugh, but here I said, 'Well, *there's* a mind at work.' It made me laugh so hard I couldn't breathe."

By way of explaining Albert Brooks' relative lack of fame, Mel Brooks said once on "Larry King Live," "I think he doesn't want the responsibility of being a star. Because he could have it. . . . He just simply doesn't *want* to be famous." Pauline Kael may have been closer to the mark when she wrote appreciatively of Brooks, "Everything he does is odd." Or, as the director Michael Ritchie put it, "people don't think any human mind works that way." In every character that Albert Brooks has created, including his standup personae, he takes a kind of extreme longing and makes it comedic, and in the process seems to imply—either arrogantly or hilariously, depending on whom you ask—that his world view is the only acceptable one.

ROBERT RISKO

I've noticed, by the way, that nearly all the people who insistently call Brooks "funny" ("He's funny! He's just *funny!*") are men. He makes women laugh out loud as well, but "funniness" is not what they mention first. They are more likely to speak of his effect on them—to say that their laughter feels like a complete loss of control but a loss without danger. They say things like "It's better than sex," and, when they amplify, it becomes clear that for them his greatest talent is for saying or conveying things that they had never had the nerve to come out with, even to themselves.



Brooks' comedy is predicated on a short fuse. In his movies, it's "well-adjustedness" that seems outré or repellent, or simply off.

Men and women agree that Albert Brooks' comedy is predicated on a short fuse. He's inordinately impatient with the little hoops of "everyday life." The impatience expresses itself not merely as irony; his humor is an overturning. Any number of comics make fun of neurosis; Brooks takes it as a given—as the fabric of American life—and in his movies and elsewhere it is "well-adjustedness" that seems outré or repellent, or simply off.

ALBERT BROOKS is six feet tall, and strong-looking. He has curly brown hair and distracted greenish-brown eyes. His voice, the way he talks, his inflections become contagious if you spend any time in his company. If I'm in a Korean grocery store nowadays, I might say to myself, "*All* right. Let's get the *blue*berries." That's the way Brooks would say it, as if any other possibility were an irremediable mistake. Sometimes, as he speeds along, talking, he'll reverse himself abruptly. Often, he can sound like a bully, or a lecturing schoolteacher. There's a scene in "Lost in America" in which the wife (Julie Hagerty), having lost the family savings gambling in Las Vegas, refers to their "nest egg," and he says to her, "Please do me a favor. Don't use the word. *You may not use that word.* It's off limits to you. Only those in this house who *un*derstand 'nest egg' may use it. And don't use any *part* of it, either. Don't use 'nest.' Don't use 'egg.' If you're out in the forest, you can *point.*"

Albert's voice never dives down low, and it never quite rises to a shriek, either. It's within the range of a normal man's voice, but it often sounds agitated. He can also be extremely persuasive. David Geffen, who has been Albert's financier over the past twenty years and whose company produced "Lost in America" and "Defending Your Life," said, "When we're about to engage in making a movie, sometimes you'll hear from him eight times a day. Or a *hundred* times a day, if he wants something very badly that you're not willing to give

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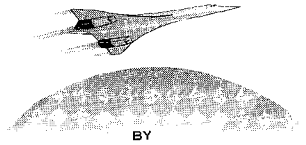

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Brooks' accent doesn't sound like Boston, where his father was from, or New York, where his mother grew up, but it doesn't have the usual flat Southern California tone, either, although he was born in Los Angeles and has lived there almost all his life. Sometimes a weird twang enters his speech; on an answering machine he might say, "It's AEELbert." Sometimes he does other people's voices. Johnny Carson told me about Albert's Burt Lancaster voice, which he once produced on the air by putting a hot potato in his mouth. (When I asked Brooks about this, he said, "I threw this hot potato in my mouth, and just to cool it down I went, 'Hhhah . . . Hhhah'—you know, like the beginning of what Burt Lancaster sounds like.") Carson laughed so hard he had to get out of his chair and grab hold of the backdrop curtain. NBC used a clip of Johnny, hands to his eyes, laughing at Albert's Burt Lancaster voice for years in promotions for the show.

Brooks has one laugh that sounds as if it were coming from the bottom of a coal mine. He laughed this laugh into a microphone about ten times in a row one morning while he was taping a movie loop in a fairly dark room at Sony Pictures, and some of us watching began keeling over with silent, forbidden laughter. The loop was for "I'll Do Anything." Up on the screen, Albert, a movie producer, was in the back seat of a car, with Nick Nolte in the driver's seat. Albert added a raucous cough to the laugh and roared into the microphone. He didn't sound anything like Albert Brooks. Most of the time, Albert's laugh is like an invitation to a secret club, and people seem to want to glue themselves to it for as long as they can. Carrie Fisher told me of how, at a certain point in her life, she and Albert would drive to Palm Springs, a two-hour ride: "Non-stop talking the entire way. *Screaming* and joking and yelling. And then we'd drive straight back, so we did it for four hours. We never got out of the car. We would just wreck each other." At moments like that, when he's spinning through one of his marathon monologues—when he's nearly incandescent—Albert sometimes doesn't laugh at all.

ALBERT LAWRENCE EINSTEIN was born on July 22, 1947. (He changed his last name to Brooks in 1967, because "Albert Einstein," he told me, was never a tenable stage name.) His father had moved from Boston to Los Angeles around 1930, and met Thelma Leeds, who was a singer and actress, when they were both contract players on the R.K.O. lot. They were married by the time they were appearing in the revue "New Faces of 1937." Albert has three older brothers: the oldest, Charles Einstein, is Harry's son by a first marriage and is a well-known sportswriter; the second, Clifford Einstein, is an advertising man; and Bob Einstein is the comedian Super Dave Osborne (he also played the sporting-goods salesman in "Modern Romance").

When Harry Einstein was still alive, the family lived in a house on Benedict Canyon Drive, just outside Beverly Hills. "It was a regular house, right next to other houses," Brooks said when I asked him about it. "It had a pool. It had green grass and a yard. There weren't any sidewalks." Inside the house, "you sort of had to be quiet," Albert told me, because of his father's heart condition, and added that he was "off into my head for the most part, making up stuff in my room." Every day, he thought, *This* is the day my father's going to die. Harry Einstein's radio career ended when Albert was a year old, so Albert was able to hear his show, "Meet Me at Parky's," only on records. "I listened to them alone in my room," he told me, and he went on to say, "When my dad died, my older brother Cliff—he sounds like me—became sort of the dad, and my mother and I fought. Then my mother married a lovely man that I was crazy about, and they stayed married for twenty-some years, until he died. He was in the shoe business—ladies' shoes." Albert put a little spin on "ladies' shoes" but then said, "He was on my side immediately. I was the smallest and the youngest. And he was very handsome but sort of short. So we just had a lot in common."

ONE evening before I went out to California but after I'd spoken to Brooks on the phone, I rented all his movies. I put the 1979 "Real Life" in the VCR and there was Albert in a cowboy shirt, with a pale-pink scarf around his neck. "Real Life" is a mock documentary—a director's psychosociological, "scientific" footage of an all-American family. The film crew's hidden cameras look like washing machines that fit over their heads. About thirty-five minutes into the film, the pure science begins to crumble. Frances Lee McCain—she plays Jeanette Yeager, the all-American wife—asks Brooks (the documentary's director) to meet her in private. They're standing in front of a shopwindow, and though Albert seems to put his arm around her, he keeps about two and a half inches of space between his arm and her back. When he pats her to comfort her, he's patting the air. After this deformed embrace, Mrs. Yeager says, "You're such a sensitive man" and "You gave me the strength," and kisses him. When she walks to her car, he spits the kiss out, wipes his mouth, and shouts after her, "I gave you nothing, Mrs. Yeager! No, no . . . I gave you *nothing!* Really. Don't think I'm anything better than what you have. You think I've got this charisma, but I don't! I really don't. . . . Oh, I have a *little* bit of it. But it just sits on the surface. It doesn't run deep. Now, no kissing. . . . It's been measured. It doesn't run deep. Now, no kissing here." He's still yelling after her: "I'm a shallow fellow. Look!" He's holding out his left forearm, the palm of his right hand going back and forth about three inches above it. "SHALLOW, SHALLOW! Really. *Shallow!*" The movie ends with Albert in a clown suit, a torch in his hand, burning down the all-American family's house.

I watched Brooks in three movies that night, and when I was trying to fall asleep I thought about the scene in "Broadcast News" when his character, a network news reporter, has to go on as the anchor without much warning and Holly Hunter, who plays his producer, looks at him, takes the shoulder pads out of her evening gown, and puts them in the shoulders of the jacket he's wearing. He lets her do it. Here was the underside of Albert's onscreen persona. The short fuse doesn't go off—it goes dead. He can express resignation more poignantly than almost anyone else.

There are Brooks fans who think the essence of his work was embodied in the short films he did for "Saturday Night Live" in its first season, 1975-76. In one of them, Brooks plays a filmmaker talking about his films. A little blond girl, playing his attention-starved daughter, comes up and bites him on the hand. He has a policeman take her away. "You won't be seeing her again," he says blandly in a voice-over. Then he shows a home movie about himself—the filmmaker as a boy. His father has a movie camera and follows him around: Albert going to the bathroom for the first time by himself, Albert kissing his first girl. Finally, the father comes barging into a room where Albert is making love for the first time. "He's nice," the voice-over comments about the father. "I see him about twice a year now."

Lorne Michaels says, "I had a sort of blind admiration for Albert. We worked together about twenty-five years ago. He was doing the Danny and Dave routine then. And, of course, I had seen 'Albert Brooks' Famous School for Comedians' "—a fake commercial with a beaming Albert giving us a tour of the "institution"—"and I'd seen him on the 'Tonight Show' lots of times. In 1975, when I got to do 'Saturday Night,' I wanted him to be a performer. Failing that, I asked him, would he host it occasionally, and, failing *that*, would he make short films. It was all he wanted to do, and I wanted him desperately. He was everything I wanted the show to be in terms of its comedic voice. I think all that ever mattered to Albert—at least, in the period that I knew him well—was the work. There were contending wills, but he was very gentle with me."

Talking to me once about Danny and Dave, an act he invented when he was barely twenty, Brooks sounded as excited as if he'd just thought it up. "Dave was the world's worst ventriloquist," he said. "He never tried to hide his mouth moving, and I had this stupid voice for the dummy." Later on, when I watched a tape of Danny and Dave from an "Ed Sullivan Show," I saw a very young, puppyish Albert throwing the dummy Danny on the floor, face down, to get his hands free so he can light a cigarette. When he gives Danny a glass of water while Dave sings, he pours the water all over Danny's face, and the water runs down onto the floor. Johnny Carson told me, "Danny and Dave—it just put me away."

IN 1976, Brooks and Lorne Michaels had a falling out—over Albert's feeling that his contributions to "Saturday Night Live" had been slighted, one gathers—and they have had little contact since. David Geffen says, "You know, it's hard to hang in there with

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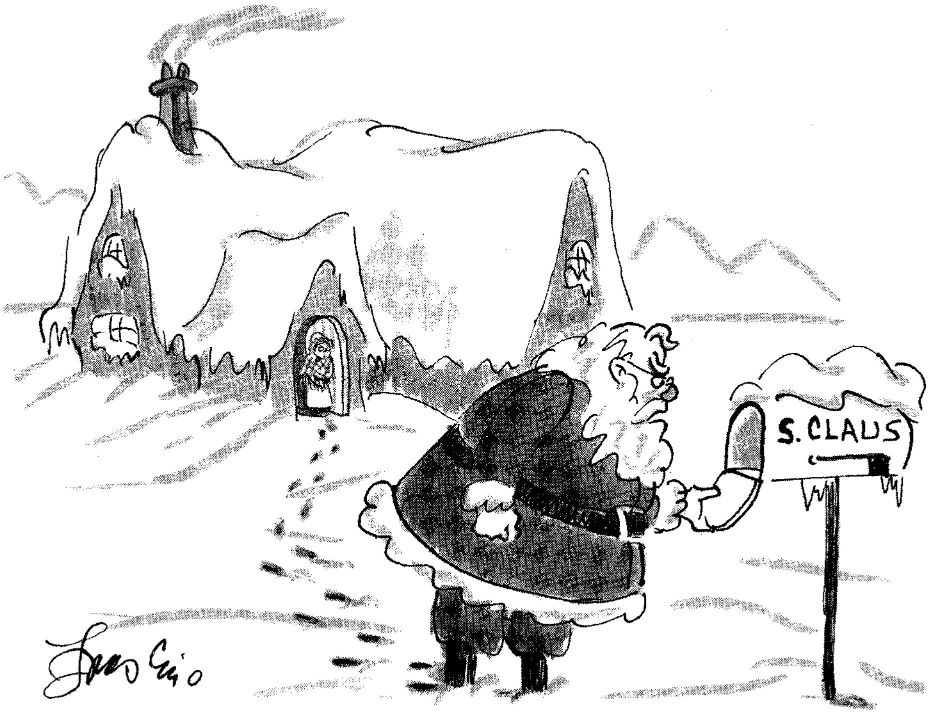
Albert . . . but I'm a believer. And I don't give up easily." Like the characters Brooks has written for himself, he can think and talk from more angles than most people, and his friends sometimes find him unrestrained. The writer and director Harvey Miller, who has known Brooks for years and is ordinarily protective of him, said in an abrupt moment, gruffly, "Too many phone calls. Too much coming over." At other times, Brooks just disappears—"goes underground," as he calls it—with little explanation. It's as if things have to be on his terms or not be at all.

When Brooks directs a movie—or acts in one, for that matter—he doesn't behave that way. Of Brooks as an actor, Holly Hunter has said, "He reveals himself, shockingly so. . . . He's ridiculously truthful." As a director, he seems to use his insight into his fears as a way of showing empathy with his actors. Hunter says, "He illuminates your scariest thought without distancing himself from people."

Julie Hagerty told me, "He just *makes* things come true." She was speaking of Brooks as an actor, in the nest-egg scene, but it's also true of him as a director: he startles his colleagues with this ability, perhaps after first puzzling them. Meryl Streep said she'd hurt his feelings once when, after many excited invitations, he took her out to Orange County to show her the location for the Past Lives Pavilion in "Defending Your Life." He'd found the perfect place, he told her, and when she remarked that it looked "like an industrial park in New Jersey," he seemed crushed. In his mind, he was seeing something else altogether. When she saw the film, she was startled to discover that he'd been exactly right.

While Brooks' friends are frank about how exasperating he can be, the devotion with which they talk about him is remarkable. They recount phone calls with him in a way that reminds you of the RCA Victor dog listening with rapt attention to His Master's Voice. They tell affectionate stories about his new house, which he moved into last year, or his old ones. And they recount the smallest, everyday encounter with him as if they'd just come blinking out of a movie theatre where it was featured. The production designer, screenwriter, and producer Polly Platt once told me, "You know the other house—the one he moved out of? No one was allowed there. Somebody would deliver a package to his house and they'd have to leave it at the gate, and he would wait, like Buster Keaton. Then he would go out and snatch the package and bring it in."

His women friends talk about him in a semi-hovering fashion. "I always wonder what he does, you know, with his life," Polly Platt said to me on another occasion. "What does Albert *do*? Sometimes I think he spends a lot of solitary time practicing some of his stories and jokes. If you ever see anyone who does magic tricks very well, you realize it means a lot of lonely, solitary practicing. I think he requires that seclusion."



"Not one crummy Valentine."

Penny Marshall, who was once married to Rob Reiner (who grew up with Albert and went to Beverly Hills High School with him), told me about the gatherings at their house in the seventies. "Jim Brooks, Harvey Miller, Jerry Belson, Chuck Grodin, Louise Lasser, Richard Dreyfuss—Albert was always the funniest," she said. "Then he had a slight nervous-breakdownish thing, when he was touring to promote his comedy album. He came over to our house and sort of stayed there on the couch, but it was the funniest breakdown you've ever seen."

Albert's sometime co-writer Monica Johnson says, "Sometime in the mid-seventies, I'd heard 'Comedy Minus One' "—Albert's first album—"at Rob and Penny's house and was dying to meet him. Penny brought him to my house, in Dixie Canyon. He had his curly hair and his twinkling eyes, and he went straight to the M&M's. It was like someone had brought over this brand-new toy. Oh my God! Anything in the room was a prop. He could sustain it for an hour, to an audience of one. It was like having a radio show come to your house. Later, we'd drive around looking for the best chicken—the ride was the thing. We would drive up the coast, to the desert, through the canyons. We did some of the movie writing in the car. For a short time while we were writing 'Modern Romance,' Albert had a silver Cadillac Seville. I remember we were stalled behind this big truck—this was on Ventura Boulevard, near Sepulveda—and we were sitting there talking and talking, and suddenly we realized there was no one at the wheel of the truck. It had just parked there."

Brooks doesn't like his friends to talk about where he lives, but Monica broke the rules, and said, "There was that house he rented on Pacific View Drive, off Mulholland. Just a little house, a very bachelor existence. And half-hanging on a hanger in a closet was the clown suit he wore in 'Real Life.' He also had a camera setup. The whole house was like a great playground studio. Anyway, then he moved to a house on Yoakum Drive

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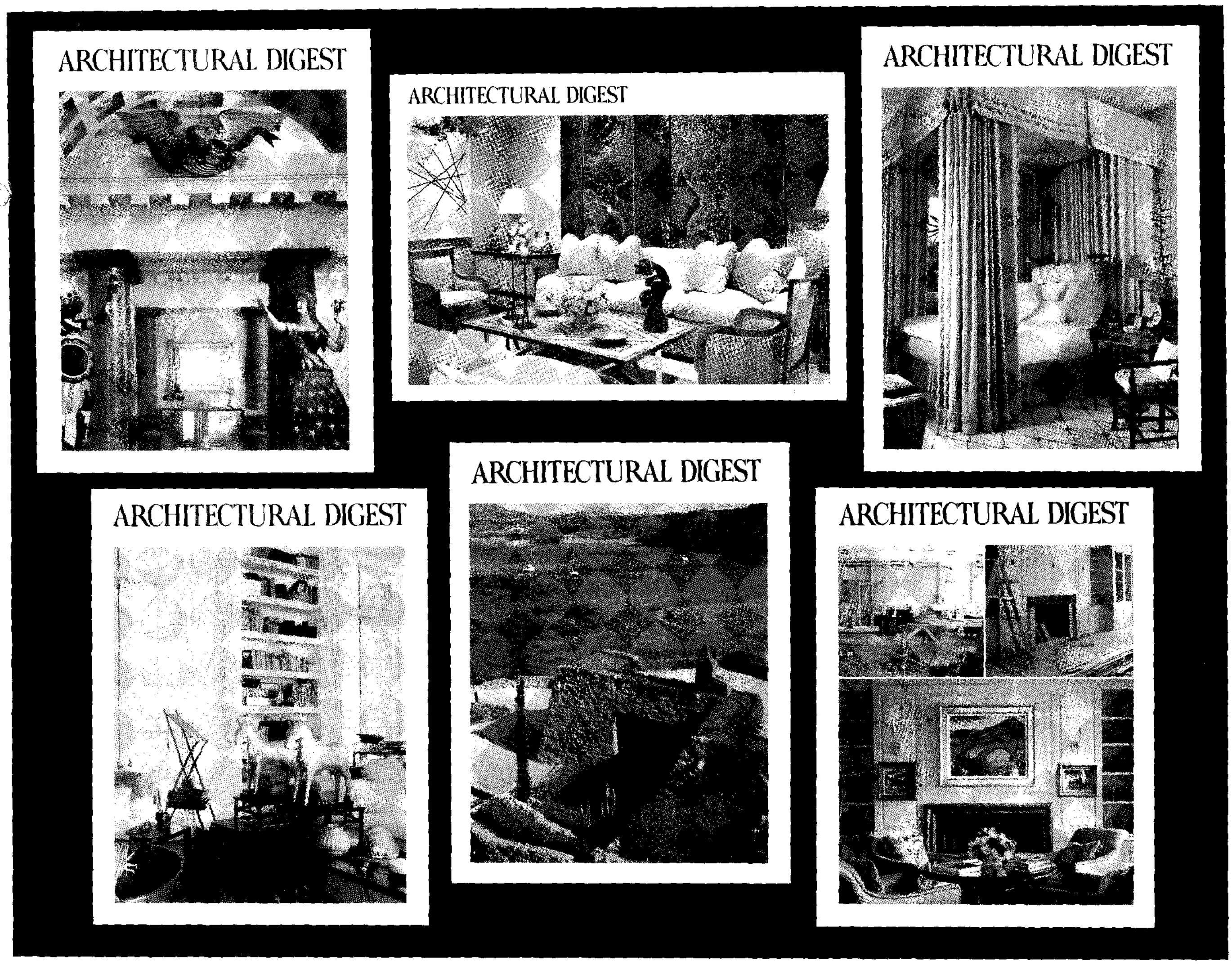

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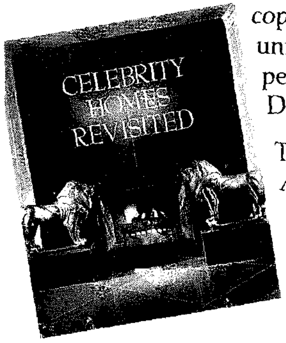

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in Benedict Canyon, kind of small. I remember he always had a lot of stuff stored in his garage. Things I had never seen before—like a big diagram of how a joke works. He had gone to the trouble to diagram it. And Danny was in there, sitting in a box. He was just a typical dummy. Straight black hair."

When I was getting dressed to meet Brooks for the first time, he called from his car to say it was *hot*, he didn't *feel* well, and could he pick me up in half an hour? I had to turn off the radio, and when I got back on the phone I told him I hadn't put on mascara yet. "O.K.," he said, in his most bullying voice. "You've got twenty-two minutes per eye." And then, as if he recognized stage-fright, he also said, "You already *know* me."

When I went down to the hotel lobby, I saw him sitting in a fake-French chair in front of a heavy pink curtain. He was dressed all in black: short-sleeved silk shirt, trousers, sneakers, sunglasses with black rims. He was chewing gum. When he saw me and stood up, he seemed taller than he does on screen. He looked like a tough man who was in a bad mood.

The car he was driving was a blue-gray Mercedes 300 E, and on our way out of Beverly Hills he drove with only one hand. I made an effort not to think about the way he got killed in "Defending Your Life" (his BMW hits a bus). The outdoor-temperature indicator on the dashboard said ninety-six degrees. The windows were shut and the air-conditioner was on. We went to Santa Monica and then on to Malibu. He told me the background of his career in a matter-of-fact tone: after his appearances on national TV in the late sixties, he'd started doing standup live, in clubs and college auditoriums. But in 1974, he said, he stopped performing for a year. Standup wasn't getting him movies—it was just getting him more standup. "I wasn't old enough to make an intelligent decision, so I sort of sent myself into a tailspin," he said. "Then I *couldn't* do it, so I rested for a year." In 1975 came the "Saturday Night Live" films. They led to acting in other people's movies (the first one was "Taxi Driver," in 1976, in which he played a zealous Presidential-campaign worker), and then writing and directing his own full-length films and acting in them.

I had been hearing endlessly about Albert's new house, but he hadn't said a word about it. James Brooks told me, "You should know Albert's new house is a major, major— It was a big deal for him to get himself a house like that. Words fail me." His friend David Kipper said, "Have you been to the Ahwahnee Hotel, in Yosemite? Albert's house is going to remind you of the Ahwahnee."

Sitting in the car, I said, "David Kipper told me you have an eagle's nest in your back yard."

"Yes," Albert said, in an ambiguous voice. "I have three eagles in a tree near me. I went to a bookstore and looked them up, and they seem to be golden eagles. They started out cute, but they're bigger now than I am, and they make more noise than a dog. They make this whistle. It's an unflattering bird sound. But they're amazing to watch. I bought binoculars, and I watched them learn how to fly. First of all, their nest is bigger than my room. It's eight feet long, I swear to God. You and I could get in there and get a good night's sleep. They go from the nest to an upper branch and back, over and over and over. Then to a little higher branch, and back. That's what they do. They hop back and forth in the same tree for about a week. Then, eventually, they move to a nearby tree. Then they fly freely, and now I'm waiting for them to leave."

"Because of the whistling?"

"Yes. I've given them hints. I've put brochures of Alaska all over the tree."

"How did you first notice them?"

"I noticed the mother finishing up the nest. And sitting there and taking care of something."

"How did you know it was a mother?"

"Well, I don't know. Do *men* sit on eggs? I didn't see a vagina, if that's what you mean, but I just assumed the mother sits on eggs."

At some point on our way back to Beverly Hills, I asked if he would show me his house. He said no, in several ways, and then explained: "All I do for a living is be exposed. That's all I am. I'm *exposed*. So if I didn't have the one little area that's not exposed, a few inches, I'd go nuts. I can tolerate if a person thinks I'm fat or thin or ugly. I can read that in the newspapers and be O.K. . . . But once, a long time ago, I let somebody come into a house, and they wrote about— They didn't like— The room looked *dark* to them. *That* bothered me. Because I live there. My house isn't onstage, *I* am." After a pause, he went on, "I guess it would hurt me more to read about my taste than to read about my talent, because I can say, 'You're crazy if you don't like my talent,' but if you put my taste down I might doubt it." His voice changed. "I'm not that secure."

When Brooks leaves a phone message, he's likely to begin, "It's *Al*bert," and then, "Are you there?" When I got back from California, we began speaking on the phone, sometimes at length. He seemed happier talking to a journalist long-distance instead of in person. I noticed that at the end of a call, almost as a substitute for "goodbye," he would say, "You call me if you need me." He never sounds as if he were doing something else over the phone besides talking. He's not putting on his shoes or doing the dishes. Sometimes he would call from his car (if the connection got broken in a tunnel, he'd call right back, in case I thought he'd hung up) or from home in the afternoon, but usually he'd call from home on Saturdays at around 9:20 A.M. New York time, 6:20 A.M. in California.

There is no satisfactory way to shorten one of Brooks' marathon telephone monologues for the page. In any given hour-plus call there would be several long loops of thought, and shorter speech rhythms within them; punctuating jokes, like little melodies; disconcerting silences. His voice and his mood would sink and rise, he would leap and swoop from one thing to another, and tear into thought patterns so complicated you never knew how he was going to tie them together, or even sort them out, but he never failed. Without a single flaw in logic, he could go from talking about his ticket for Pan Am's first moon flight to the naïveté of early telephone operators to a weatherman in Des Moines. Periodically during these conversations, he would wind down and then would swerve in some unfathomable direction and be off again, swinging from affection to scorching harshness but staying on the phone.

Albert often has a hard time getting off the phone. One Saturday morning, we'd been talking for an hour and a half—about everything from apple fritters to "why the Bible could never be true." Since I wasn't allowed to see his new house, I'd begun asking to *hear* things in his house. He'd played me his keyboard (organ, piano, string samples, then rhythm: "Here's Boogie . . . Here's Beguine . . . Mambo . . . Samba") and he'd played me his piano ("Cocktail music: nobody drives here to hear it"), and now he said, "I bought a good fan yesterday. Do you ever buy fans?"

I told him I had, a year ago.

"Well, there's a thing called a Vor*na*do. It's *small*, but, boy, is it *powerful*."

"What's it called?"

"VORNADO," he said loudly.

"With a 'V'?"

"Yeah," he said in a half whisper.

"Like a 'tornado,' only with a 'V'?"

"That's right. Exactly. They got some gimmick. I mean, it's like small, but it's wonderful. Geez, 'It's wonderful'—Look what we're talking about. I'm going to *kill myself*. We're talking about a fan!"

I wondered why that was depressing, but then he asked, "What did *you* buy?"

I said I'd got an oscillating one and wasn't crazy about it.

"*Yeah*. It's like a bus going by. I keep getting up and looking for something. It comes with *announcements:* 'NOW ARRIVING, FLIGHT 44.' I *hate* that. No, this doesn't oscillate. No, this stays in one place and blows the air seventy, seventy-five feet without the air moving away from the column. It's not a big deal, but it's very quiet. Want to hear it over the phone? Here's at top speed." There was the sound of Albert playing his Vornado into the phone. It sounded like a flock of birds—maybe doves—all shoved together and in a big hurry. "That's the thing right there."

When I asked him what that sounded like to him, he got into a fifteen-minute story about the wind at the North Pole, and a three-minute story about the Red Sea waters, and then, after a silence, he said, "Well, O.K. I guess I'll get up. I'll take a little walk, have some coffee, and get my day going." He paused. "O.K." He said O.K. on three notes, almost parrot-voiced. I could tell we were close to hanging up. Then he was saying, "You call me if you need me. Goodbye." ♦

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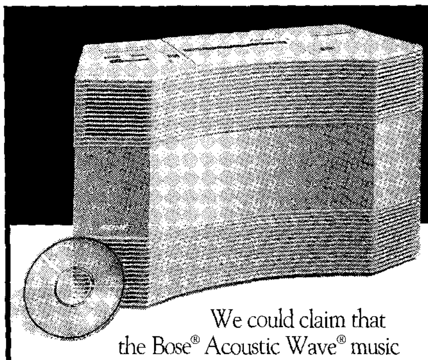

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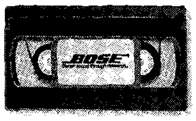

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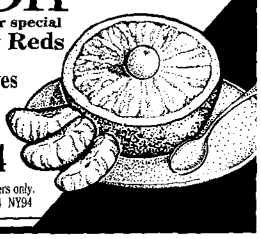

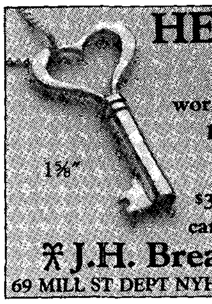

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LETTER FROM LIVERPOOL

CHILDREN OF CIRCUMSTANCE

What influences could compel two young boys to kill a third? A city and a country are left to wonder.

BY BLAKE MORRISON

It was the video footage of a security camera, jumpy and poignant as an old cine film, that made the case famous. A small child could be seen at loose in a shopping center, then following two older boys, and then disappearing with them, past a sign that said "Mothercare." Three hours after that abduction, captured on film in a Liverpool shopping center last February, two-year-old James Bulger was dead.

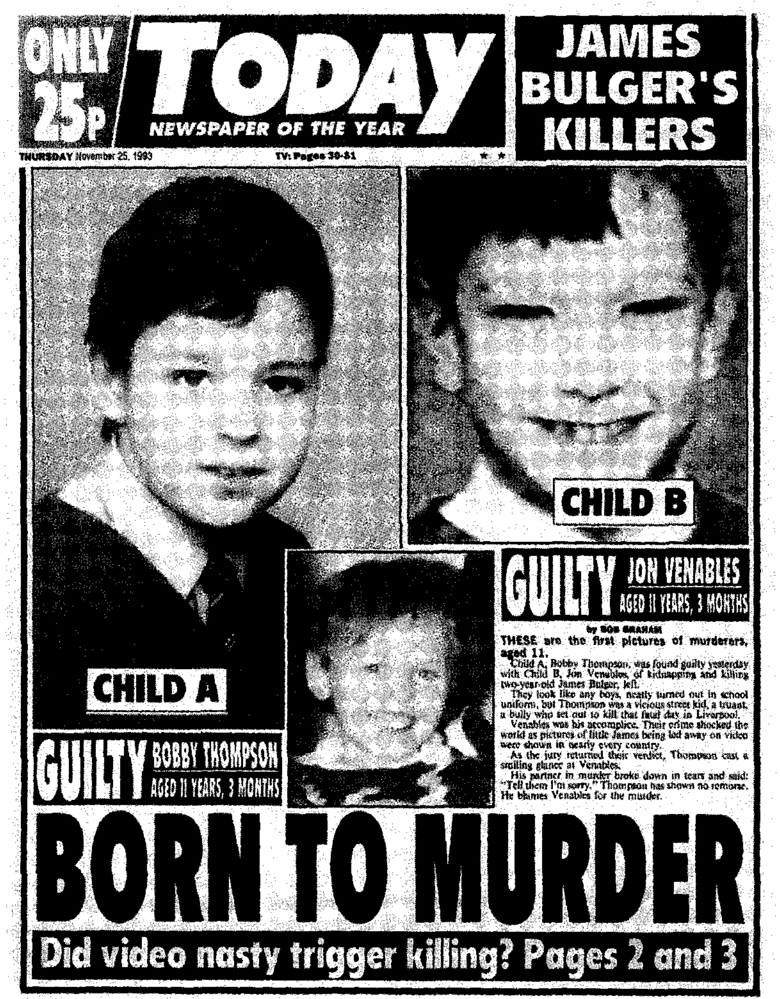
Since November, after a trial found them guilty of murder, the boys who killed James Bulger have been identified. We knew them throughout the trial as Boy A and Boy B; we know them now as Robert Thompson and Jon Venables, both just ten years old when they committed the murder. Sentencing them, Justice Michael Morland said that they would have to be detained "for very many years." But his more recent, "confidential" recommendation, leaked to the press, is that the boys should be considered for release after eight years—a recommendation that has outraged James Bulger's parents (and many others). If the hope had been that the murder trial would appease the pain, anger, and trauma that still surround the case, it has not been fulfilled.

Nor has the trial brought a clearer understanding of what happened last February. When the subject comes up for discussion, as it does in England very often, the first word on most people's lips is "Why?" To tabloid newspapers and to the police who interviewed Thompson and Venables, they are "freaks of nature," "evil monsters," whose crime was strictly a "one-off." No one, it seems, will acknowledge the meaning of what happened, or take responsibility for it. Each boy blames the other boy. Each boy's defense counsel blames the other boy. Each boy's mother blames the other boy, though Robert Thompson's mother also blames teachers and social services. Others have blamed videos, single mothers, absent fathers, original sin, and the church.

All murders have an element of mystery: unfathomable motives, contradictory evidence, missing links. But the Bulger case ought not to provoke shrugging bafflement or occult notions of "evil." Its story is the story of a divided country, a depressed city, two disturbed families, and the fateful interaction of two boys.

ROBERT THOMPSON had a good reason to be at school on Friday, February 12, 1993. His truancy record was so lamentable—forty-nine half days missed out of a possible hundred and forty the previous term, thirty-seven out of sixty since Christmas—that a meeting had been held with his mother, the head teacher, and an education welfare officer. According to Jon Venables, Robert had been promised that if he could complete a week without bunking off he would be rewarded with a present. That week, he had apparently not missed a single session, and the next week was the half-term holiday. Ann Thompson, his mother, had sometimes made efforts to stop his truancy, by hiding his shoes, locking him in his room, and taking him along to the local police station for a lecture. But, as a single parent, whose time was now taken up by an eight-month-old baby, she found it difficult to insure that Robert and his younger brother, Ryan, went to school or, having gone, stayed there. Until the previous November, she had left to their four older brothers the task of escorting them the half mile to school, but now that those boys had left home—moving into lodgings or into foster care rather than living in their overcrowded council house—her habit was to send Robert and Ryan out at 8:30 A.M., and not to expect them back till six. Often, she let them go out again afterward; the tradition of "playing out," even in winter, is still strong in the working-class streets of Walton, a neighborhood in north Liverpool, where the family lived.

For Robert, home had not been the same since his father left, with another woman, four years earlier, and his mother, in her anger and despair, began to drink heavily in the local pub. The family had moved from Anfield to Walton in 1988. School, too, because of his truancy problem, had become punitive and rejecting: last September, he had fallen behind in his work, and had been held back a year. The school could readily justify this decision, because Robert was an August child: if he had been born nine days later, he would have been in that grade anyway. Being there now was demeaning for him nonetheless.



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JAMES BULGER'S KILLERS

THURSDAY November 25, 1993 TV: Pages 30-31 ★ ★

CHILD B

CHILD A

GUILTY JON VENABLES AGED 11 YEARS, 3 MONTHS

by BOB GRAHAM

THESE are the first pictures of murderers, aged 11.

Child A, Bobby Thompson, was found guilty yesterday with Child B, Jon Venables, of kidnapping and killing two-year-old James Bulger, left.

They look like any boys, neatly turned out in school uniform, but Thompson was a vicious street kid, a truant, a bully who set out to kill that fatal day in Liverpool.

Venables was his accomplice. Their crime shocked the world as pictures of little James being led away on video were shown in nearly every country.

As the jury returned their verdict, Thompson cast a smiling glance at Venables.

His partner in murder broke down in tears and said: "Tell them I'm sorry." Thompson has shown no remorse. He blames Venables for the murder.

GUILTY BOBBY THOMPSON AGED 11 YEARS, 3 MONTHS

BORN TO MURDER

Did video nasty trigger killing? Pages 2 and 3

Coverage of the Thompson-Venables murder trial portrayed the boys as "freaks of nature." No one, it seems, will acknowledge the meaning of what happened.

NEWS UK LTD.

Jon Venables was also an August child who had been held back a year, on the ground not of truancy but of academic performance. His older brother and younger sister were children with "moderate learning difficulties," who attended a special school. Despite evidence to the contrary, Jon's parents seemed to see him as the "normal" middle child, who would prosper in the right "ordinary" school, and he had moved to a school in Walton seventeen months before.

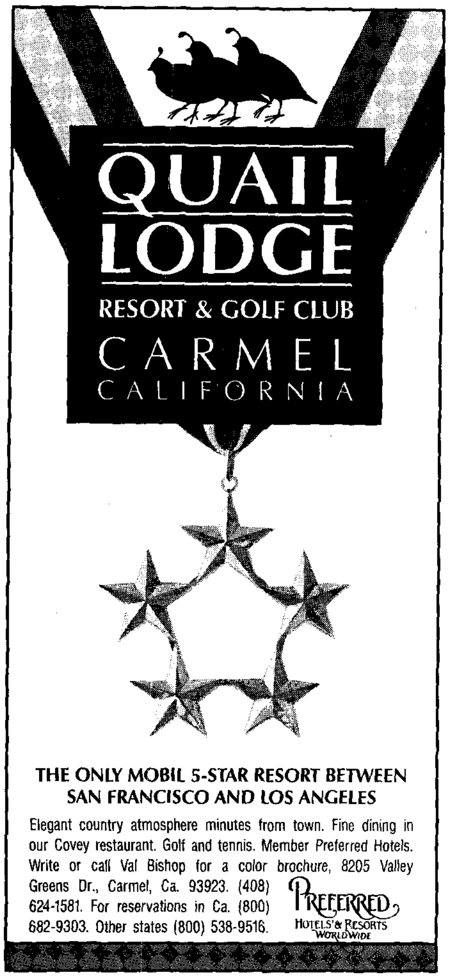
The Venables family was less impoverished than the Thompson family, and had higher aspirations. Jon's parents, Susan and Neil, divorced early in 1986, and she eventually moved out to a semidetached estate house in a more suburban area, while he now lived in a flat near Jon's new school, but they remained on good terms and shared the child care. Lately, they had been spending a lot of time together between Thursday and Sunday in Neil's flat, and despite the welfare benefits they stood to lose if they shared a single residence again, they were considering a reconciliation. Both knew that since meeting and befriending Robert Thompson, whom they regarded as a bad influence, Jon had begun to play truant. And though seemingly unaware of the extent of his truancy—forty half days in the autumn term—they had put him under pressure to improve. On February 12th, Jon left for school with a note from his mother to the head teacher asking if at the end of the day he might bring the school gerbils home for the half-term holiday.

Despite the incentives of presents and pets, when Robert and Jon met up on the way to school that morning they agreed to "sag." By nine-thirty they were in the Bootle Strand Shopping Center, two miles from the school. Shoplifting was their main pursuit that day, and among the things they stole were a packet of batteries and five tins of Humbrol paint, the brand generations of British children have used on their model-plane construction kits. They also—less prankishly—made a couple of attempts to lure children away from their mothers. (There may have been another attempt at abduction some weeks earlier. Children at the boys' school later claimed that Thompson and Venables "used to ask us do we want to be in their gang, we're going to kill someone.")

Around three, James Bulger arrived, with his mother, Denise. They had "come for the ride" from their home in the neighborhood of Kirkby, with her sister-in-law, Nicola Bailey, and Nicola's three-year-old daughter. James, so Denise later told the police, was in boisterous spirits, "into everything." Several times, he ran off, and Denise, according to Nicola Bailey, "had to smack his legs." It was while she was in the queue at the butcher's, A. R. Tyms, that James disappeared. The security videotape shows James alone outside the butcher's at 15:38:55 and his mother searching for him at 15:40:24. At 15:43:08, some four minutes after he left the butcher's, there is that last shot of him leaving the shopping center, his hand placed trustingly in the hand of Jon Venables.

Venables later said in interviews that the idea of "losing a kid" had been Thompson's: "He said, 'Let's get this kid lost. . . . Let's get him lost outside so when he goes into the road he'll get knocked over.' " But on busy Stanley Road, outside the shopping center, the boys kept safely to the sidewalk. And though Venables said that by the nearby canal Thompson injured James—slamming him on the ground and leaving him with a nasty graze on the forehead—they did not push him in the water. They were only fifty yards from the shopping center here, but they weren't intercepted.

While Denise Bulger was giving a description of James to a security guard—a month short of his third birthday, navy-blue anorak, gray tracksuit, white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trainers, white T-shirt with the word "Noddy" on it, blue scarf with white bobbles—the three boys began walking two and a half miles to Walton, via Breeze Hill, an extraordinarily long distance for a two-year-old to cover. Their route took them along some of the biggest roads in north Liverpool at a time when the traffic was at its peak. Thirty-eight witnesses could remember seeing them. Some said that James was dragged, most that he was holding hands with one or both of the boys. Some said he was crying, some that he was laughing. One observed that when he wandered dangerously near the road the chubbier boy, Thompson, returned him to safety. But several noticed the graze on his forehead, and most said later that he was being roughly treated.

Not that rough treatment was thought a cause for interference. In a northern working-class environment, where to be thought "dead 'ard" is a tribute, boys were left to be boys. Mark Pimlett, for example, the driver of a dry-cleaning van, later told police that in his side mirror he saw Thompson aiming a kick at James Bulger. Why did he drive on? Because this was not a "full-blast" but a "persuading" kick, such as, he implied, he was accustomed to seeing used on toddlers. Had a dog been punched and kicked as James Bulger was, its tormentors would certainly have been stopped. But England is a country where it's still quite common to see children being hit—usually by their parents—in public, and where the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals annually receives many more millions of pounds in donations than does the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children.

THE roads near that part of the route have the names of Oxbridge colleges: Merton, Balliol, Exeter, Gonville, Downing, Wadham, Clare. But nothing could be less like Brideshead than this part of Liverpool. To imagine it, you have to set aside images of college quads—and of camomile lawns, bluebell woods, country lanes, mazy rivers, dappled meadows, rolling downs, and all the other pastoral myths of southern England—and think instead of a vast tract of brick and concrete. Between Breeze Hill and the railway track where James Bulger died, the only grass to be seen grows between the graves in Walton churchyard.

There are those, among them George Orwell, the painters Atkinson Grimshaw and L. S. Lowry, and the makers of the television series "Coronation Street," who have found warmth, and even beauty, in the terraced streets of the industrial North. But the view from the reservoir on top of Breeze Hill is as mean and dispiriting a panorama as you will ever see. The roofs of houses stretch to the horizon: pebble-dash semis, low prefabs, dirt-encrusted red brick row houses, mock-Tudors, a handful of high-rises, boarded-up shops. A large, squat pub called the Mons—"short for the Monstrosity," say the locals—stands, in its bleak anonymity, as the inverse of whatever cozy virtue English pubs once had. This is a landscape emptied of energy and innovation—a city that no longer knows what to do with itself.

The great nineteenth-century social commentators on the North of England—Engels, Tocqueville, Carlyle, Dickens, Gaskell—described ugliness, poverty, smoke, and overcrowding, but they also saw bustle, energy, a region exploiting its natural resources and leading the world in engineering, manufacturing, and transport. In this century, as the industrial age has passed away, the gap between North and South in England has steadily widened—and never more so than during the twelve years of Margaret Thatcher's premiership. Liverpool, with its narrow industrial base—ships and docks, but few factories and no mines—has been especially hard hit. A 1990 survey of two hundred and eighty British towns placed Liverpool two-hundred-and-seventy-fourth; a 1993 European Community survey ranked its poverty equal to that of Sicily.

Appropriately, one of the first buildings the three boys passed on their walk was a JobCentre, and one of the last, as they turned right by the City Road railway bridge, was another JobCentre. In Liverpool, the JobCentre is where you go not to find work but to confirm that there is none to find: in the month of the murder, unemployment was 15.2 per cent, or 4.4 points above the national average; and around thirty per cent of eighteen-to-twenty-four-year-olds are without jobs. The working class has become used to not working.

None of these boys' parents had jobs in Liverpool in February, 1993. Before giving birth to her children, Ann Thompson had been an office cleaner, and before her children were born Susan Venables had worked as a clerk at the Littlewoods Pools Company, which runs a national football lottery, but neither had worked more than occasionally since. Ralph Bulger possessed a heavy-vehicle driver's license, had been on seventeen training schemes, and hoped to be a forklift-truck driver, but hadn't found a job. Neil Venables *had* once worked as a forklift-truck driver, at the Jacobs biscuit factory, in Aintree, but had lost his job in 1984. Robert Thompson, Sr., was an electrician but he had moved away from the Liverpool area. From JobCentre to JobCentre: coming from the backgrounds they did, the boys were trekking a route they could expect to walk again when they left school.

At least twice along that route, the boys told strangers that they had a lost child with them, and asked directions to Walton Lane Police Station, whose whereabouts they actually knew—surely an appeal for adult intervention. But they also told other witnesses that James was their brother. William Howes, one of the last people to see James alive, heard Jon Venables saying, "I'm fed up with having my little brother. I have him from school all the time. I'm going to tell my mum I'm not going to mind him no more." The words were intended to reassure Howes, who knew the Thompson family, that here was a harmless group. But the words also spoke of harmed feelings. Robert Thompson, like his older brothers, had often felt put upon by having to mind a younger sibling; on a previous truanting spree, he had abandoned his weeping eight-year-old brother at the canal by Bootle Strand. Lately, he'd also had to cope with the arrival of the baby. Jon Venables, for his part, felt jealous and neglected because of the attention given to his brother and sister, with their special needs. He had also been teased about them. Mark had been born with a cleft palate, and kids in the street taunted Jon for having a "divvie" (stupid person) in his family. Thompson hinted at his aggression toward his siblings when, denying his part in the murder, he told the police, "If I wanted to kill a baby, I'd kill my own, wouldn't I?"

Fraternity, or the lack of it, is the heart of the Bulger tragedy. Liverpool is the city associated with the Beatles' song "Penny Lane": "All the people that come and go / stop and say hello." And the great refrain of the industrial North is that, while its people don't enjoy the material benefits of the South, they are warmer, more community-minded, stronger on family values. But in recent years images of mutual trust—the back door always open, neighbors minding each other's business, friends who would give you their last shilling—have given way to burglar alarms, glass-topped back-yard walls, and guard dogs. Neighborliness has been replaced by Neighbourhood Watch schemes; brotherhood has become the surveillance cameras of Big Brother. In London, indifference to others has long been part of city life, but that no one in Liverpool intervened to save James Bulger has been cause for much heart-searching.

THE last place James Bulger was seen alive was in an "alley" beside the railway embankment, with a ten-foot-high wire-mesh fence on one side and the gable ends of row houses on the other. The boys lingered here for several minutes, apparently unsure what to do next: to the right, a hundred yards away, was the Walton Lane Police Station; to the left, a little farther away, was Robert Thompson's home. Both were obvious places to go, but places that would have got them into serious trouble. Even as they stood hesitating in the alley, Susan and Neil Venables were searching the area, having learned of Jon's truancy at three-thirty—two hours earlier. The appeal of the railway may have been that from there they could deliver James into the back compound of the police station unobserved. Or they may have simply decided to "lose" him instead.

Even as they walked along the tracks, it's not certain that they planned to kill him. Though he had been punched and bullied along the route, James, with his toddler's short memory, was still capable of enjoying the boys' company; only minutes earlier he had been laughing. But whether he began to cry again or the boys' patience had run out, or one or both of them exploded into violence, or the killing they had spoken of cava-

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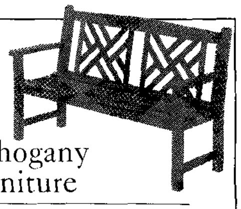

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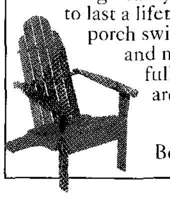

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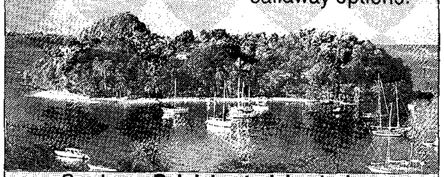

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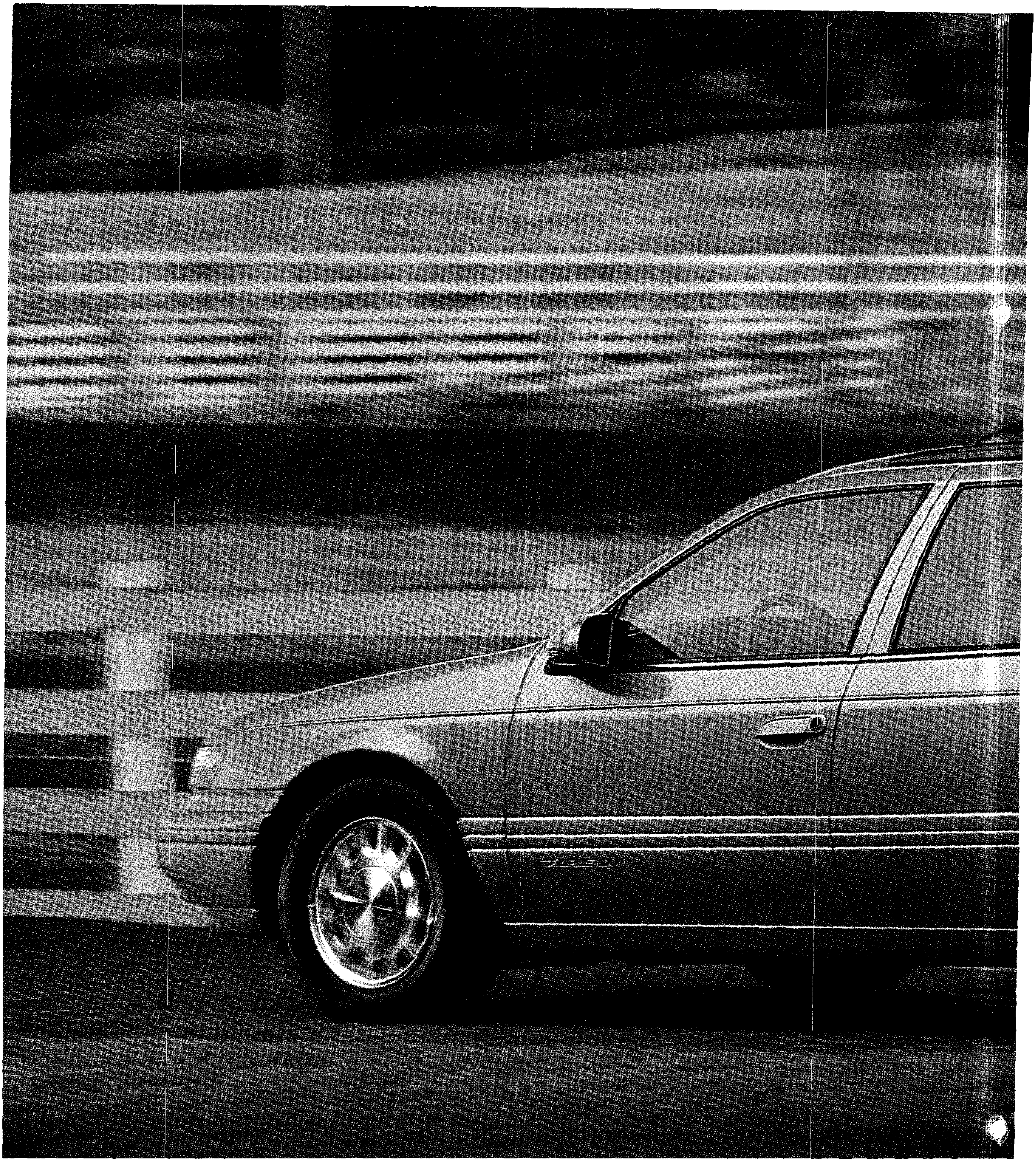

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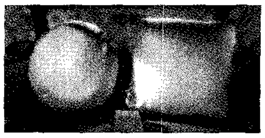

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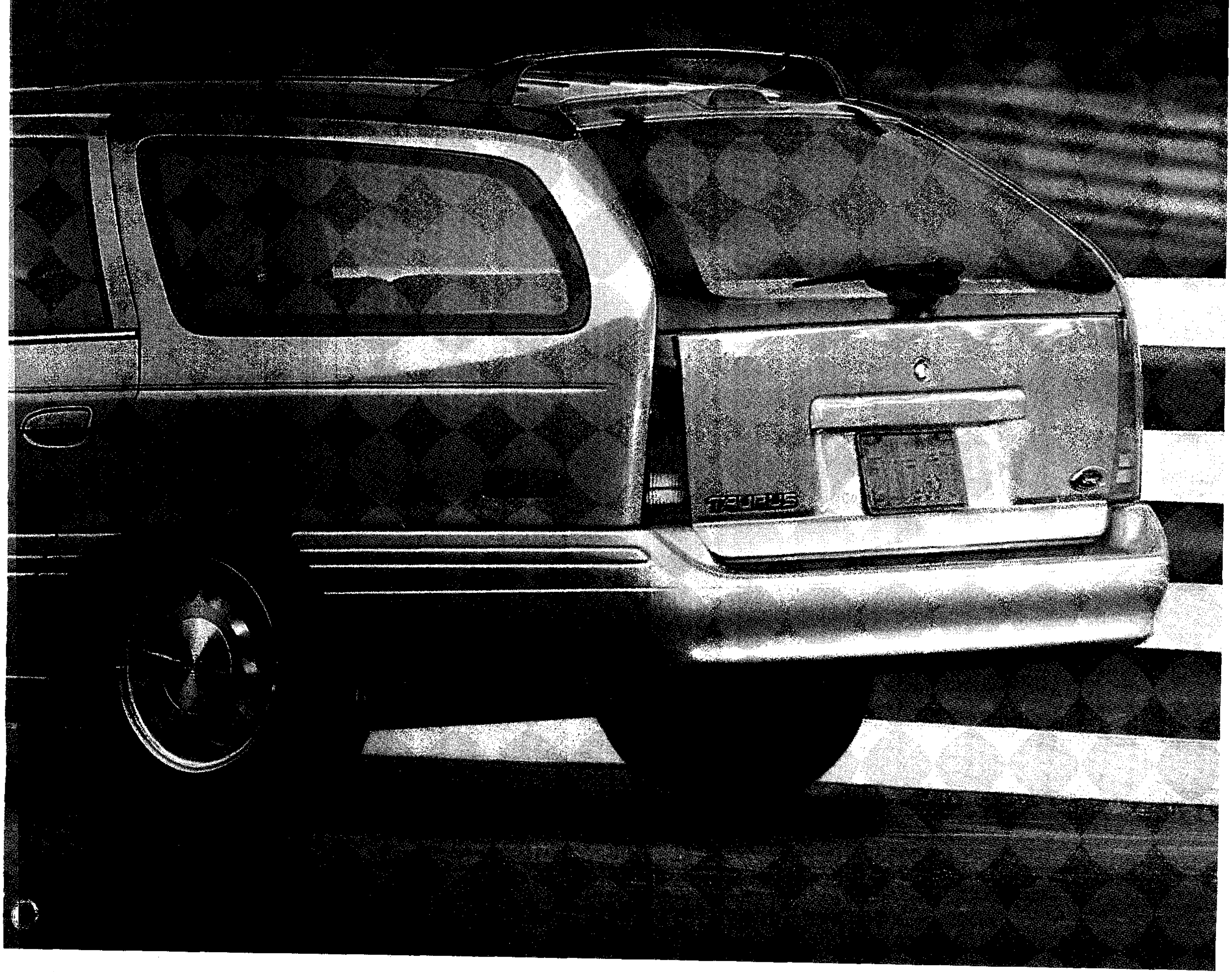

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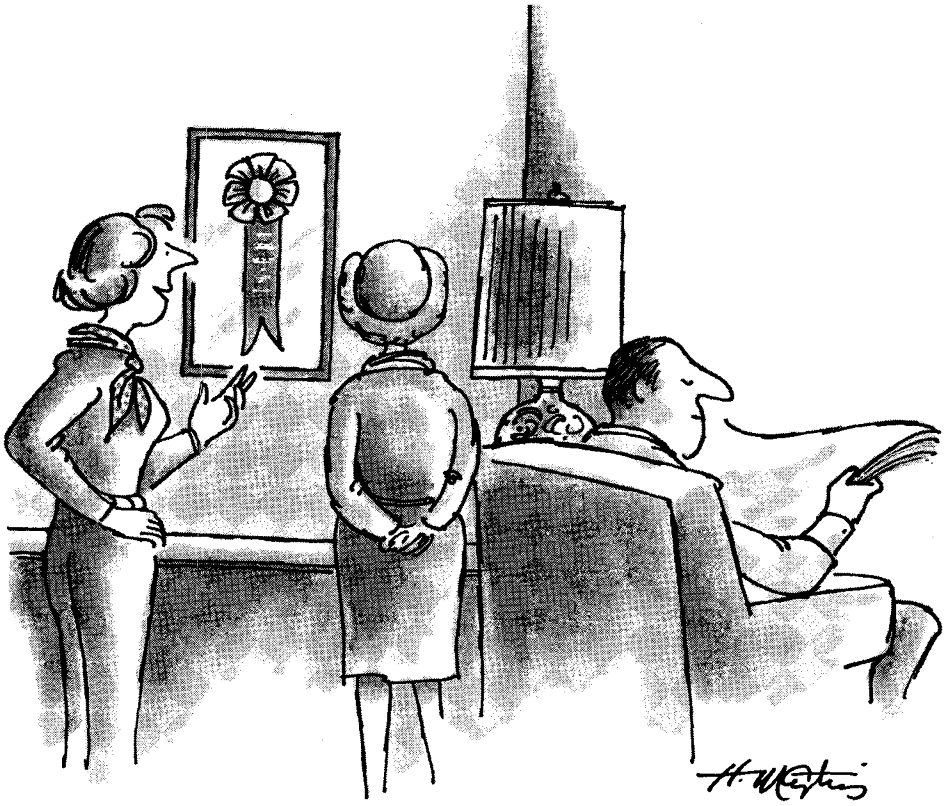

"Harold won this at the State Fair for being a prize boob."

• •

lierly now seemed enactable, this was where they reached the end of the journey.

The attack began bizarrely: paint from one of the stolen Humbrol tins was thrown in James's face. It seems to have been thrown out of some instinct to violate and dehumanize James—to wipe away his normal features and make him an easier target. The paint probably just happened to be there—something stolen earlier for other purposes, which was opportunistically turned to this purpose.

But there is another theory, which appeals to those who believe that the murder was a preconceived plan, and explains why the judge at the trial of Thompson and Venables spoke of the possible role in the murder played by violent videos. One of the last videos rented by Jon Venables' father (and probably seen by Jon) was "Child's Play 3," a horror film about a demonic doll, Chucky, who carries out a series of brutal killings and at one point has blue paint splashed in his face. Parallels between the murder and the "Child's Play" films look less convincing onscreen than they sound on paper, but several are worth mentioning: Chucky frequents the tracks of a roller coaster; Chucky, unlike other "Good Guy" dolls, can run without batteries (the stolen batteries were found near James's body); Chucky separates a child from its mother; above all, Chucky encourages the belief that a two-year-old (which is what he resembles) is malevolent and indestructible. (The influence of the "Child's Play" films was unambiguous in another murder, in Manchester, whose trial coincided with the trial of Thompson and Venables. Four young adults were found guilty of torturing and murdering a teen-age girl, Susanne Capper. While keeping her strapped to a bed before burning her to death, they chanted a refrain from the films: "I'm Chucky. Wanna play?")

From the spot where the paint was splashed on James Bulger's face to the spot where the attack on him took place is a hundred yards. Here the boys began throwing bricks at him—eventually, more than twenty of them. A twenty-two-pound metal fishplate, found lying nearby, was hurled at James's head, "knocking him out," as both boys recounted. They also kicked James: Thompson left the imprint of his right shoe on James's right cheek. In all, at least thirty separate blows were inflicted, and James sustained forty-two injuries, including extensive shattering of the skull, brain hemorrhaging, and the separation of the lower lip from the jawbone. The photograph of the last detail is the worst to look at. The hail of bricks suggests that the boys simply didn't know how to make James Bulger die, but the jaw looks as if it might have been torn by a hand or had something stuffed inside it—torture and mutilation.

The boys did other things, not reported at the time, and underplayed at the trial. They removed the clothes on James's lower body—his trousers, underpants, socks, and white trainers, all of which were later found nearby, the underpants stained with blood from his face. They also probably played with his penis; the pathologist reported that the foreskin appeared abnormal and had been partly retracted. Moreover, though the pathologist reported no tear in the anus, the police who interviewed Thompson and Venables suspected that at least one of the batteries found near his body had been "introduced"—inserted—into it.

As James lay dying, Robert Thompson picked him up. Careful to avoid getting blood on his clothes (because, he said later, "blood stains, doesn't it, and then my mother would have to pay more money"), he laid the child face down across one of the rails. Living near the railway, as he did, Thompson knew the times of the trains, and perhaps thought the death could be made to look like an accident. A large number of bricks were piled on James's head and upper torso, almost like a shrine.

After coming down from the railway embankment, the boys went into the video-rental shop near Thompson's home and watched cartoons. It was there that Susan Venables spotted them and, furious, dragged Jon away for a telling-off at the police station. A tearful Robert Thompson ran home to tell his mother that Mrs. Venables had hit him in the face. In the company of a neighbor, Ann and Robert Thompson went to the station to bring an assault charge against Mrs. Venables, who had left shortly before. The duty officer wasn't impressed, and the Thompsons returned home. Among several bizarre aspects of this case is the fact that within an hour of killing James Bulger both boys were inside Walton Lane Police Station with their mothers.

JAMES BULGER'S body was found on Sunday afternoon, forty-eight hours after his disappearance, by four boys out walking on the railway line. It had been cut in half by a freight train. The upper torso, surrounded by bricks, lay between the rails; the lower, unclothed, lay some six ties away, on the far side of the rail. A leaf had been stuck by blood to the sole of the right foot. In the next days, hundreds of floral tributes were laid on the railway embankment. Among those who came, with a single red rose, was Robert Thompson; his face was even caught by a television crew. Later, during questioning, he told the police, "Why would I take flowers over to the baby if I killed him?"

On Wednesday night, the police, who had already interviewed fifty boys from the area, received a call from a neighbor of Jon Venables, who knew from his mother that he had been truant on Friday, and who thought she recognized him from the Bootle Strand videotapes. The police arrested both boys early the next morning.

The first formal interviews began at six o'clock that evening, in two different police stations, where a pair of police officers were assigned to each boy; the last interviews were on Saturday afternoon, two days later. Afterward, the boys were formally charged with murder, and, in accordance with British law, no further interrogation could take place. There were, in all, eleven taped interviews with Thompson (six hours and twenty-nine minutes) and nine with Venables (five hours and fifty-four minutes); playing them in court, nine months later, took up the best part of a week.

The police were proud of these interviews. They had followed correct procedure, with a parent and a solicitor present at all times. Through regular liaison, each interviewing team knew how the boys' versions of events were at variance. It was partly because of this that the case was cracked so quickly. But then the police were dealing with ten-year-olds, not hardened criminals: the voices on the tapes are the tiny, unbroken, couldn't-hurt-a-fly voices of two schoolchildren slowly being caught in the web of their own lies. The anthology of their untruths compiled by the prosecution, and by the judge in his summing up, became a major part of the case against them. Only children who *knew* they'd done wrong, it was asserted, would seek to conceal the truth as these two had done. For children, however, lies and truth are not the separate, stable entities they are for adult criminals. And the tapes show the boys to be very different kinds of liars, whose lies tell us important truths about their characters.

Streetwise, aggressive, defiant ("I don't have to answer any more questions"), Thompson treated his interviews as a battle of wits. With some justice, he told the police, "With youse, we always gets the blame," and he acted as if he had the family's honor to defend. His greatest fear was that the police were "blaming me for everything, not Jon Venables," and when he cried it wasn't out of remorse but out of an exasperated recognition that he wasn't going to get them off his back. He was good at remembering his lies, at "sticking to his story" or, if tripped up, weaving in a new detail to account for it. His interviews read like a chess match: after a bad opening move—saying that he noticed James Bulger at Bootle Strand but denying that he abducted him—he defends himself, counterattacks, and is only slowly ground down to make further concessions. Throughout, the police treated Thompson as an adult, whose cunning mind they respected and with whom they could banter:

> Q: What's your hobby, then?
> A: Skipping school. (*Laughs.*)
> Q: That's not a hobby, that's a profession, Bobby.

To Thompson the police explained that they were trying to put together the pieces of a jigsaw. With Jon Venables it was nothing so logical: he was invited to think of the events of that day as a film playing in his head. For hour after hour, until he finally cracked, Venables narrated the plot of a fantasy movie—a fabulous tale in which he and Thompson covered extraordinary distances across Liverpool but never went near Bootle Strand. In this naughty but innocent world of sweets stealing, swings, and sandpits, Thompson was the hero, a good-bad guy with courage and machismo, who boasted of even bigger exploits on the railway: "He sleeps there and lights fires. . . . He told me he walked to London."

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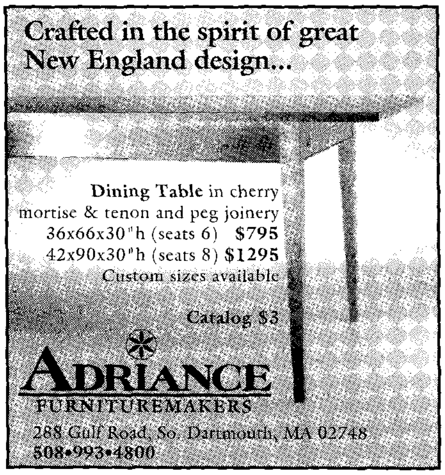

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plete fabulist, Venables on his tapes sounds five years younger than Thompson, a child enthralled by trolls and Thunderbirds—a child fond of words like "teeny-weeny" and "thingy," and desperate not so much to throw the police off the scent as to remake what happened that day into an image that he had half-convinced himself was true. It's noticeable that throughout Venables refers to his exciting friend as "Robert," and not—as most people called him—"Bobby." You wonder how well Jon really knew Bobby. You wonder if the comparative briefness of their relationship wasn't what made it so dazzling. You wonder if the friend he described wasn't just a fantasy.

Venables was allowed to run with his urban pastoral for nearly five one-hour tapes until he was told that Thompson had confessed their abduction of James Bulger. The tape here is heartbreaking: panic, tantrums, huge wails of denial and distress—"I never took the baby, Mum. . . . I never touched the boy." But reality had broken in. It wasn't long after this that Jon Venables admitted he hadn't only touched the boy but killed him: "What about his mum? Will you tell her I'm sorry?" Once his fantasy world collapsed, there was little he could retrieve from it; he could only make sporadic efforts to seem less culpable than his partner.

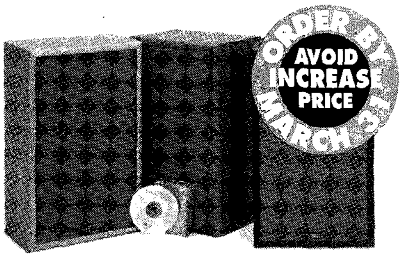
Some of Jon Venables' claims certainly sound like lies: having made a clean breast of it, he did not apply himself steadfastly to the truth. In court, this lack of proficiency at telling lies became an implicit part of his defense, cited as proof of a vulnerability and would-be honesty, which was contrasted with Robert Thompson's "cunning": wasn't it likely that the more adult, adept liar was also the leader of the attack on James Bulger? But Jon Venables' love of storytelling for its own sake is, in its way, no less disturbing: wouldn't it take such a fantasist to dream up the idea of getting a kid lost in the first place?

ONCE the boys had been charged, tabloid newspapers were full of sensational details about these anonymous "brats," "tearaways," and "back-street kids from busted homes." In the quality press, they were seen as part of a rising wave of juvenile crime. The consensus was that Britain was becoming a more dangerous place to live, and figures subsequently published do show an annual eleven-per-cent rise in violent crimes since 1982. On the other hand, there have been just six killings in Britain by children under fourteen in the last ten years. And though in 1991, for example, seventy-four children under five were murdered, not one of them was murdered by a stranger: most died at the hands of their own parents.

Some newspapers emphasized the scene of the crime, dubbing Liverpool "the world capital of self-pity," and recalling how the place, which in the nineteen-sixties produced the Beatles, had since experienced only trouble and tragedy: the Toxteth riots of 1981; the Heysel and Hillsborough soccer disasters, in 1985 and 1989; the scandal of a corrupt left-wing local council; a lingering debt of more than a hundred million pounds (much of it in unpaid rates and poll taxes), which in 1991 pushed the city to the edge of bankruptcy. Liverpudlians have long been used to the cheap derision of London newspapers and other "foreigners," and they have learned to stick together in adversity. Ralph Bulger's view, despite his son's death, was that Liverpool remained "a great place, full of warm people." Harry Rimmer, the leader of the city council, took the same line when he wrote tetchily to the *Guardian* to protest the slandering of his city. The murder, he said, "could have happened in any city in the country."

The crime figures support him. Most of Liverpool's problems are shared by the other great industrial cities of the North, and many of its problems beset the whole nation. In private, though, the city council was anxious to satisfy itself that nothing more could have been done. On March 25th, barely two weeks after Rimmer's *Guardian* letter appeared, two confidential case conferences were held at the Liverpool offices of the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children, at which teachers, social workers, probation officers, health visitors, and a child-protection officer discussed the Thompson and Venables families. Both these case conferences were, in effect, exercises in self-exoneration. The conference reports, to which I obtained access, make disturbing reading nonetheless.

Reports of violence in the Thompson



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family had been emerging ever since they moved to Walton, late in 1988. Within two weeks of enrolling in the primary school, the third son, Ian (then eleven), was stealing, and the fourth, Philip (then ten), was seen with bite marks. Ryan complained of bullying by Robert. Philip was seen to punch Robert in the face, outside the school, in June, 1990. Philip complained of bullying by Ian. Ian said that David (the oldest Thompson boy, then sixteen) had hit him with a "pole," and that his mother had at least once used a "cane" on him. (After the latter incident, at the end of 1992, he had asked to be put into foster care.) Philip had already gone into care, after an incident, reported to the police, in which he alleged that David had "battered" him, chained him up, tarred and feathered him, and locked him in a shed. Only Peter, the second Thompson boy, who had left home at fourteen, in 1990 (David followed him two months later), goes unmentioned in this catalogue of bullying.

There are reports, too, of the Thompson boys being left unattended by their mother, who had had a violent and loveless childhood herself, and whose inconsistent and poor parenting deteriorated still further after she was left by her husband and took to drink. The boys felt that with their father's departure everything had begun to go wrong; between 1986 and 1988, when he owned a camper van and took them to Southport on camping holidays, they had felt comparatively happy and affluent. But the early years of the marriage had been volatile, too. Robert Thompson, Sr., had allegedly beaten his young wife; they had lived in deep poverty until the mid-nineteen-eighties; and in 1977 David (then just four) had been placed on the Child Protection Register after being seen with a cigarette burn and a black eye. Unmentioned in the reports of the case conference was the fact that while Ian Thompson was in care in early 1993, just weeks before the Bulger murder, he had attempted suicide with an overdose of paracetamol. In earlier years, his brother Philip and their mother had also taken overdoses.

In the Venables family the case conference found no equivalent violence, despite a strong suspicion that Susan Venables was not averse to chastising her children physically. The evidence was rather of nervous tension, not to say disorder. Susan had suffered from a "serious depressive problem," especially after the marriage breakup. Mark, the older boy, and Jon, three years younger, both had "explosive" tempers, and there had been anxiety about Susan's ability to cope. The "special needs" of the children were, the parents thought, one reason for the breakup of their marriage—that and Neil's losing his job and Susan's liking to go out at night a lot "with friends." In January of 1987, the police were called to the family home because the children had been left alone for three hours. A social worker was referred to the family around Christmas of 1989, because of Mark's "very volatile and unexplained bad behaviour."

There was also concern about Jon's disturbed sleep pattern and disruptive behavior at school. In one incident, he stood on a desk and threw chairs; in another, he nearly throttled another pupil with a ruler before being dragged off; in a third, after being dismissed from class for disruptive behavior, he hung himself upside down from a coat peg, like a bat. There had been some improvement when he changed schools, but his new head teacher nevertheless found him "a strange, unusual, and difficult boy," poorly coördinated and with a squint, and given to fighting in the playground: it was during one of these fights that he had met Robert Thompson. The subtext of this case conference seems to be that the Venables were a family with problems who didn't like to be seen as a family with problems—least of all, problems of mental dysfunction.

By May, the boys' legal representatives knew that they faced a trial date in November, and had begun to consider the various defense options. Both boys had given clear instructions that the plea should be not guilty: Venables said that he had played only a minor part in the killing, Thompson that he had played no part at all. A plea of not guilty on the ground of diminished responsibility due to mental incapacity was not attractive to either family. Mental incapacity would also be difficult to prove, since the law on this point was geared to recognize the mental problems of adults, not juveniles. But psychiatrists had been called in to provide professional assessments for the

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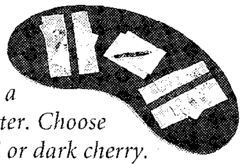

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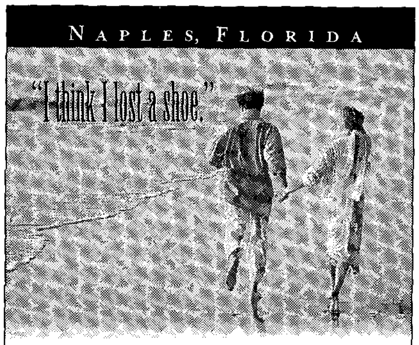
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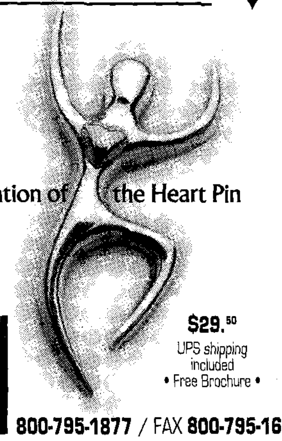

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prosecution, who needed to establish whether the boys were intellectually capable of distinguishing between right and wrong. (Under British law, children under fourteen are presumed to be incapable of forming the necessary intent to commit a crime—the presumption of *doli incapax*—unless the prosecution can prove otherwise.) And first Venables' defense counsel, then Thompson's, decided to explore this area, too.

Jon Venables, his bed lined with Teddy bears "to keep away bad things," was seen ten times, by three different consultants. Robert Thompson, less coöperative, was seen just once, two weeks before his trial. The experts' views, which weren't entered into evidence but to which I also obtained access, were that neither boy had suffered from any mental disorder on February 12th, though Jon had "an unrealistic view of family life, with clear denial of any difficulties or problems" and Robert was "fighting back a strong range of feelings . . . emotional conflicts, doubtless relating to home and school life [which] drove him to participate in a very calculated way in these offences."

Whether the boys were fit to participate in the trial was something the psychiatrists doubted. One found Venables "unable to talk about the events of February 12th in any useful way," while another thought Thompson's "capacity to conduct his defence has been impaired" by post-traumatic stress disorder. But "unfitness to plead" would have led to a deferral, at best, and no one considered a deferral best here, since both boys were unable to receive therapy until after the trial.

There was, *pace* the experts, some ground for *doli incapax*. Thompson, in one of his interviews, had asked the police where James's body was. "At the hospital," he was told, to which he replied, "They've taken him to try and get him alive again." Venables, the prosecution's psychiatrist noted, didn't like blood and fighting on videos. "When he watched them," he said, "he thought they were real and would cry." Both boys, in other words, had shown a naïveté about what was real and what was unreal. A case might have been made that here were a pair of deeply immature children, inhabitants of a culture of cartoons and video games, who had conducted an experiment to zap a living child and see what happened. But, with two teachers from the boys' school adamant that they did know right from wrong, the defense could have little confidence in making this argument stand up.

There were other difficulties. Neither boy could give the kind of detailed instructions that legal representatives expect of adult clients. Neither wanted to testify, or was likely to perform well if persuaded to do so. Last, and most important, the two defense counsels were working to a large extent in opposition to each other—a "cutthroat defense," as it is known.

It was generally agreed that the only previous case helpful in thinking about the case of Thompson and Venables was that of eleven-year-old Mary Bell, and many of those involved—including the head of the police investigation, Albert Kirby—made a point of reading Gitta Sereny's celebrated book about her. During a six-week period in Newcastle in 1968, with the collusion of her friend Norma Bell, Mary had strangled two boys, aged three and four. Mary, though she was two years younger than Norma, was the obvious leader, and there were clear resemblances between her and Robert Thompson: under interrogation, both came across as cold, manipulative, and adult; both felt neglected by but fiercely loyal to their mothers; both had been conspicuous among the mourners of their victims. Most disturbing for the prosecution and for Albert Kirby, Norma Bell had been acquitted and Mary Bell found guilty only of manslaughter, on the ground of diminished responsibility. Kirby, who felt close to the Bulger family, took the view that only a double murder verdict would suffice.

THE trial of Robert Thompson and Jon Venables opened in Preston on November 1st, nine months after and thirty miles away from the crime. No one wanted a repeat of the angry mob scenes back in February, when the boys were remanded in custody. Though the trial was a lead item on the national and local television news that morning, there was only a modest queue for the public gallery, and most of those in line were journalists who had not been allocated seats in court. Eight seats were reserved for the Bulger family. Denise, seven and a half months pregnant, was in court only for the verdict, but Ralph arrived on the first day, wearing a leather jacket, chewing gum, and accompanied by other members of the family—large men who kept their counsel and their dignity but whose anger was palpable.

All the spectators wanted to see the boys, of course. At first sight, as they stepped up into the dock, which had been specially raised for them by three inches, they seemed like brothers, even twins: both were chubby (Venables had put on more than twenty pounds since his arrest); both had neat haircuts and were wearing jackets and ties; both seemed, if anything, younger than eleven. Soon, though, differences became apparent. Jon Venables was the more obviously overawed. Several times, he leaned against the arm of his social worker, talking anxiously to him and crying. His parents were sitting on benches just behind and below him: Susan Venables appeared brisk and unemotional, in a blue suit and with a gold-chain handbag; Neil Venables, a small, anguished man, held his head in one hand. Jon seemed to be much supported, and also loved, and as the trial wore on he cried less often. Even the terrible howls and wails on his taped interrogations, which reduced many of those in court to tears, didn't affect him that way: he merely hunched into his jacket, letting the collar and lapels billow up and bury his face.

Robert Thompson, impassive and expressionless, was something else. Reporters at the front of the court talked of his staring them down. He had a habit of swinging his legs, and of removing his jacket and his shoes. The tabloid press made much of his "unfeeling" yawning and scratching, though few of us did not yawn and scratch during the more tedious moments in court. He also showed more signs than Venables of keeping up with the proceedings: when one of the barristers used the analogy of "painting with a broad brush," he leaned across and asked his social worker, "What's a broad brush?"

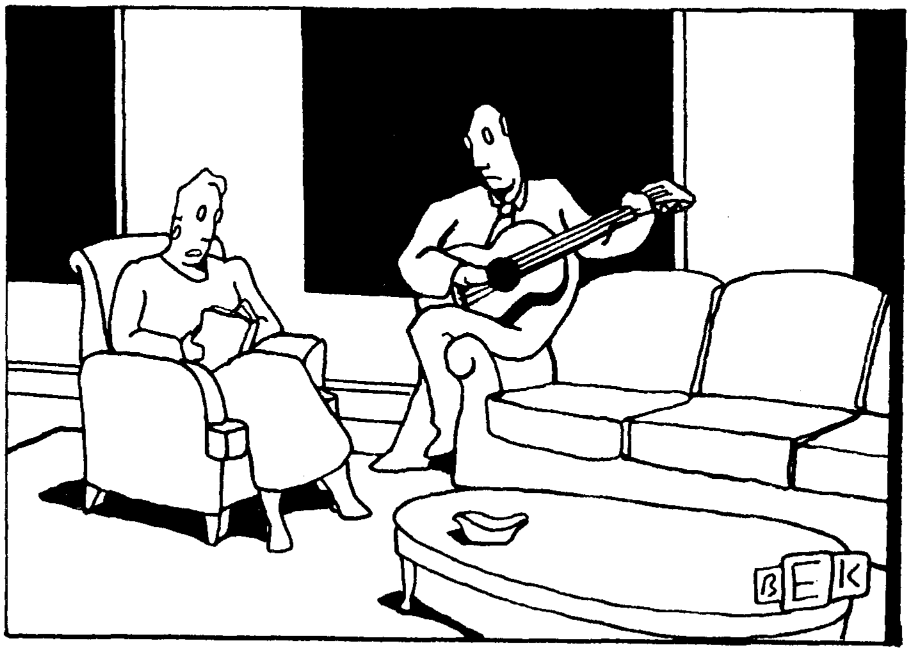
Thompson's defense counsel pointed out in his summing up, "Those who have been dry-eyed may also be feeling pain and misery," and toward the end Thompson expressed his misery—and, some would say, strong hints of psychic or sexual disturbance—by habitually rubbing a wet finger round his upper lip, pulling out his lower lip, stroking his tongue, sucking his clasped hands, chewing his neck chain, and licking his fingers one by one before wiping them on his trousers. But if all this suggested more distress than he liked to let on, Thompson's looks and demeanor did him few favors. At the beginning of the trial's third week, he arrived back from a long weekend with his hair convict-cropped, as if he were already resigned to a long spell inside.

Above all, Thompson looked like a child on his own. It was the ninth day of the trial before his mother turned up, having been prevailed on by the family's solicitor: she had chosen that day because the teachers at her son's school were due to give evidence, and she held them largely responsible for what had happened. A short, overweight woman with dark hair and in dark clothes, looking much older than forty, she sat big-eyed and traumatized, staring not at Robert but straight ahead into blank space, with a look that said the ordeal was as much hers as her son's.

The parents, at least, could understand what was going on in court; with the boys it was less certain. Their presence seemed almost incidental. Nothing was addressed or explained to them, nothing pitched in the language of eleven-year-olds. They were spoken of as Dickensian "street urchins." The judge in his summing up even mimicked their accents ("yeah," "on me own," "cos"). Despite the calm, ritualistic propriety of the proceedings, the trial was at times horribly reminiscent of a theatrical spectacle.

Most eyes were on the interaction between the boys—the "chemistry," the pecking order. As witnesses gave evidence, Venables often darted anxious looks at Thompson, as if to gauge his reaction. He looked like a boy needing to win approval and to be reassured of his friend's continuing regard. Thompson denied him such reassurance; occasionally, he deigned to look across, but mostly he behaved like the big lad determined not to notice the squirt trying to make an impression on him.

In an overwhelmingly one-sided case (three weeks of prosecution evidence, a mere four hours of defense), the only real drama in court surrounded the thirty-eight people who had seen James Bulger on his journey to death. Made ill at ease by the court's formality, and by the unfamiliar, posh accents of the lawyers, witness after cowed, mumbling witness—shoppers, store assistants, pedestrians, bus passengers, car drivers, school kids—had the same tale to tell, if one could hear it: the taller boy in the mustard jacket, the chubbier one in the dark jacket, the baby in the blue jacket, walking together, seemingly a family group. No one doubted the sincerity of these witnesses. But most had come forward after seeing the video footage on television; some called after seeing a full-scale reconstruction of the crime on the



"If music be the food of love, shut up."

popular BBC television program "Crimewatch"; and all felt themselves to be on trial. They were the ones who had noticed but done nothing. In the city whose anthem is the Gerry & the Pacemakers version of the song "You'll Never Walk Alone," they had allowed James to continue on his long walk to death.

As the trial reached its fourth week, it was clear that neither defendant had an alibi, that there were no legal loopholes, and that nothing was to be served by putting either boy in the witness box. Accordingly, when the prosecution concluded its case the two defense barristers stood up, in turn, to declare, "We call no evidence." This still left the possibility that a brilliant or passionate summing up might sway the jury, but since each boy's defense rested on a denigration of the other boy they effectively cancelled out each other's cases. The only point they could agree on was that the killing of James Bulger had been a mischievous prank that went horribly wrong as they tried to unsaddle themselves of their "self-imposed burden." As for the rest, there was no denying the imprint of Thompson's shoe on James Bulger's cheek, and no getting round Venables' confession: "I did kill him."

No one could know exactly who had done what on the railway, but Justice Morland, in his summing up, explained that the issue was not who struck the fatal blow, or even who played the leading part, but "if both were in it together." His recapitulation of the evidence upheld his own view: by going through the boys' taped interviews evenhandedly, one by one, he suggested an equal complicity.

Five and a half hours after the jury retired, it returned its unanimous verdict: both Venables and Thompson were found guilty of the abduction and murder of James Bulger; on a third charge, the attempted abduction of another child, the jury failed to reach a verdict. Hearing the outcome, Jon Venables and his parents at once began to cry. Robert Thompson, who had looked around in vain for his mother, took large gulps of air; by the time he returned to court half an hour later, for sentencing, he had met her crying downstairs and had finally broken down himself. Red-eyed and snuffly, he was no longer a tough guy but a sad, frightened eleven-year-old.

As the boys left the dock for the last time, Ray Matthews, Denise's brother, shouted, "How do you feel now, you little bastards?" Over four weeks, it was the only lapse in decorum (and a forgivable one). The next day, though, James's uncle, Jim Bulger, called a television phone-in and threatened to kill the boys. Ralph Bulger, too, told a newspaper over the weekend, "One day they will be out of jail, and I'll be waiting for them."

SHORTLY after the sentencing, Jon Venables and Robert Thompson left the court in two heavily protected police vans and returned to separate secure units, in the northwest of England, where they had been held since February. There they remain (though Thompson may soon move to alternative accommodations), their progress monitored at staff-and-parent meetings four times annually. Each boy has his own room, which is locked at night. Each has access to facilities—such as books, television, table tennis, and pool tables—that he did not enjoy as liberally while he was at large. In Thompson's house, there had not even been a phone.

In the months leading up to the trial, the boys did not receive treatment or therapy (which might have unlocked evidence that would prejudice their case). Jon Venables had been given a false identity, as a car thief, to protect him from other inmates, and this made it all the harder for him to come to terms with what he had done. Now therapy has begun.

One question that still hangs over the Bulger case concerns the sexual abuse of James before he died. The matter was all but suppressed at the trial, out of sensitivity to the Bulger family. (Ralph, in particular, had been tormented by the possibility, asking when the body was found, "What have they done to him? Has anybody had him?") The police interviewers believed that the boys knew something, though. When the batteries were first mentioned, only vaguely, to Thompson, he said, "Someone else might have put them in there, mightn't they?" And both he and Venables, when pressed to account for the removal of the clothing and the interference with James's "privates," became noticeably upset. At the end of one interview, Thompson complained to his mother, "They're trying to make out I'm a pervert."

A history of physical and sexual abuse is, research suggests, the single most consistent factor in juvenile murder. In the Venables family, there is no evidence of sexual disturbance beyond Neil's predilection for violent and pornographic movies. In the Thompson family, there is no clear evidence, either, but physical abuse of younger siblings seems to have been routine. Did Robert Thompson do to James Bulger something that had been done to him, or something that he had seen done to other small children? In his tenth interview with the police (not played in court), he was asked about the "dirty marks" on his face after he'd left the railway. Baffled, he replied, "What do you mean, dirty marks? . . . Like sex marks?" This misreading of the word "dirty" would be unusual in a ten-year-old who had not been exposed to sexual activity of some kind. However humane the motives for underplaying the possible sexual-abuse component in the killing, it is vitally important for understanding what went on. It may point to the abuser's being the leader in the attack. It also suggests that abuse could have been the prime motive and murder a necessary punishment, or "silencing," of the victim afterward.

The reason Justice Morland has recommended that Thompson and Venables be considered for release in eight years is that he believes eight years is a long time in the life of any boy now aged only eleven. But the protests against that recommendation will make it difficult for the Home Secretary, Michael Howard, whose final decision it is, not to put the date further off. Even then, inflammatory publicity—for the memory of the Bulger case is certain to live on—may make it impossible for the boys (or men, as they will then be) to be rehabilitated.

It is a bleak prospect. But the case of Mary Bell offers some hope. For much of her eleven-year imprisonment, Mary continued to idealize her feckless prostitute mother and—manipulative and sexually precocious—made only slow progress toward rehabilitation. At twenty-three, under her own name but without publicity, she was released. Now, having changed her name, she lives quietly with her daughter. She is, by all reports, a good parent. ♦

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ANNALS OF COMMUNICATIONS

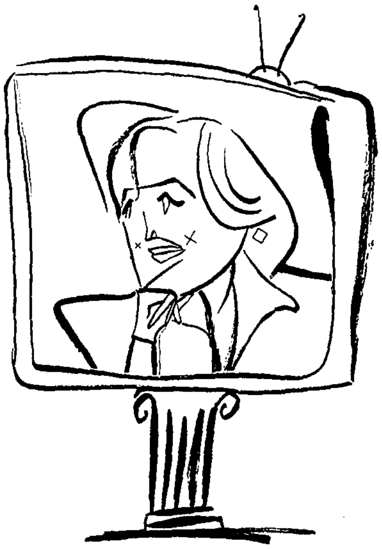
PROMISE HER THE MOON

To the television networks, the star power of a Diane Sawyer is ever more crucial. So another contract bidding war has begun—led again by Fox.

BY KEN AULETTA

“DIANE is the John Madden of network news,” a Fox executive who is engaged in a feverish but still quiet contest with ABC, CBS, and NBC to recruit Diane Sawyer said last week. With dozens of channels in existence and more on the way, the four networks are competing to hire brand names, just as they competed over John Madden, football’s outstanding analyst, after CBS lost the contract for National Football Conference games last December.

Sawyer’s contract with ABC News, which pays her nearly three million dollars a year, expires at the end of this month. “PrimeTime Live,” the weekly magazine of which she is a co-host, has risen into the top fifteen most-watched weekly programs. She has displayed versatility when sitting in for Peter Jennings on “World News Tonight” and for Ted Koppel on “Nightline.” Some viewers sense in her a feigned sincerity or a fake supermarket-tabloid intimacy. “All right, was it really the best sex you ever had?” she once asked Marla Maples. Still, Sawyer has accomplished what stars are supposed to accomplish: she has delivered an audience. Since ABC knows this, Roone Arledge, the president of its news division, has been courting Sawyer diligently—giving her a new executive producer last month and now offering her a new, four-million-dollar-a-year contract.


Rupert Murdoch offered Diane Sawyer seven to ten million dollars a year.

TOM BACHTELL

But, as was true with Madden, the three other networks are also pursuing Sawyer. Howard Stringer, the president of the CBS Broadcast Group—smarting from his loss of Madden and the N.F.C. games to an extravagant bid from the Fox network, and from his near-loss of the “60 Minutes” correspondent Ed Bradley to ABC—has been especially ardent. A tall, joke-cracking Welshman with an Oxford education, Stringer has mounted an offensive based in part on charm. He recruited Henry Kissinger, who is a CBS board member and a Sawyer confidant, to join the chase. Together, they have told Sawyer what a loss it was for CBS when she moved to ABC, in 1989. To accommodate her talents, Stringer has proposed a half-hour nightly news analysis and commentary patterned after “Nightline,” which would be broadcast at 7 P.M., right after “CBS Evening News with Dan Rather and Connie Chung.” Her base pay would “exceed four million dollars,” a CBS executive says.

Stringer’s pitch to Sawyer goes like this: A nightly platform would allow her to stay on top of the breaking news of the day—something that is not possible for a weekly magazine show. It would be the only single-topic network news platform between 7 P.M. and 11:30 P.M., when ABC broadcasts “Nightline.” It would be largely unscripted, and so would stretch her talents. It would originate from a New York studio, and thus promise a less arduous travel schedule than she has now and more time with her husband, the director Mike Nichols. It would make the statement that news—not entertainment, not tabloid TV—was ascendant, even in the arid zone between 7 and 8 P.M. And such a nightly program, which Stringer is talking to Hollywood studios

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about jointly syndicating, could make her very rich, since she would own a piece of the program.

The richest dollar offer so far has come from Rupert Murdoch's Fox network. Murdoch has met personally with Sawyer. Richard Liebner, Sawyer's agent, hinted to ABC officials that Murdoch had offered close to ten million dollars annually if Sawyer would agree to anchor a magazine show on Sunday directly after John Madden and the N.F.C. games. Its competition would be "60 Minutes." A Fox executive puts the offer closer to seven million dollars. Murdoch, less concerned with costs than with establishing a franchise, has now paid liberally to launch a sports division and may want Sawyer to launch a news division. "We want somebody with news credentials," an important Fox executive says. "If we got her, we would be very aggressive in news."

NBC has also made its interest known. Andrew Lack, the president of NBC News, has met with Sawyer several times, and has discussed creating a prime-time news-magazine show. He has told her that she would not have to share anchoring duties, as she does with Sam Donaldson on "PrimeTime Live." In addition, she would serve as backup anchor for the evening news. "It would be terrific to have her at NBC," Tom Brokaw, the anchor of "NBC Nightly News," says. "She's a premier television-news player. One of the knocks on us is that we don't have enough talent on the next level down—enough star quality. Though we have an impressive generation of reporters coming up behind me, the television audience is not aware of this. It would be helpful to me when I go away to have someone like Diane. I'm on a short leash. Though we have people who can step in, they all have day jobs."

THE courtship of Sawyer has had its ups and downs. Two weeks ago, ABC News executives thought she was ready to sign on. A meeting between Arledge and Liebner was scheduled for Friday, January 28th. Then Arledge cancelled the meeting, because, he says, he knew that Sawyer had *the* flu and first needed to speak with her agent. The meeting was rescheduled for Monday, the thirty-first. Arledge's superiors grew nervous. Worried about losing Sawyer, Robert Iger, ABC's president, opened his own line of communication with Liebner last week.

The meeting between Arledge and Liebner on January 31st was businesslike. Liebner knew that he had leverage. He knew, he told associates, that "there is no one in the industry who does not want to play to get Diane." He knew that Ted Koppel was engaged in sometimes fractious negotiations with Arledge. Liebner also knew that ABC News was smarting because "NBC Nightly News," guided by the former ABC producer Jeff Gralnick, was narrowing the ratings gap between the two evening news programs. With all this in mind, Liebner instantly said no to the offer—four million dollars—that had been on the table for weeks. The two men parted with Arledge asking Liebner to come back with a counterproposal.

When they spoke on the telephone the next day, Liebner did not specify a figure that Sawyer would accept, but he did suggest a range of between eight and twelve million dollars. The two men agreed to continue talking. Then, late on Wednesday, February 2nd, Iger wandered over to Arledge's office to review where ABC stood with Sawyer. Before the night was out, Arledge had successfully completed telephone negotiations with Koppel, by agreeing that ABC would pay him what one knowledgeable participant says is between five and six million dollars a year. Arledge and Sawyer met Thursday evening, and afterward he was hopeful that they could conclude something in a week or two. But he acknowledged, "She's like a kid in a candy store who's been told she can have anything she wants. It's very difficult to decide."

OBVIOUSLY, ABC knows that it's in a bidding war. What the network hopes to avoid is nightmarish negotiations of the sort it had with John Madden. Earlier last month, according to three sources with intimate knowledge of the discussions, ABC and Madden shook hands on a four-year, nine-to-ten-million-dollar deal that would bring Madden to the network's "Monday Night Football." So certain of the deal was ABC Sports that it went to Dan Dierdorf, who has been the network's analyst for the Monday-night games, and told him he would be losing his job to Madden. A celebratory dinner with Madden, Iger, Dennis Swanson, the president of ABC Sports, and Madden's agent, Barry Frank, of the International Management Group, was held on January 3rd.

"We had a handshake," a still bitter ABC executive says. Barry Frank will not confirm or deny the handshake. "If that's their feeling, I won't comment," he says. Within days, Murdoch offered Madden three times as much as ABC had—more than thirty million dollars over four years, a source close to Madden says; twenty-five million, a Fox source says—and Madden was gone.

To prevent another such loss, ABC is hitting back at its rivals. It has reminded Sawyer and Liebner that Fox has no news division, and that if she were to be the anchor of a Sunday magazine show on Fox it would enjoy the strong lead-in of football games only during the football season, and that her year-round competition would be "60 Minutes," the most durable hit show in history. To go to NBC, the ABC people say, would be to start a new magazine show when she already has one.

The bidder that ABC most worries about is CBS. "It's the CBS offer that's in play now, not Fox's," an ABC executive said at the end of last week. When Sawyer or Liebner notes that CBS would allow her to define the top news story of the day and put it in perspective, her ABC bosses scoff. A ranking ABC News executive says, "It's the stupidest idea in the world. Very few stations would clear it." He points out that the hour from 7 to 8 P.M. is controlled not by the networks but by local stations. It is an hour when stations slot lucrative syndicated shows, like "Wheel of Fortune" and "Entertainment Tonight." All that CBS can guarantee is that Sawyer's show would be broadcast on the seven stations the network owns, which reach just under twenty-five per cent of all American homes. Because the shows that local stations currently run from seven to eight tend to appeal to younger viewers, and a younger audience translates into more advertising dollars for the stations, ABC claims, local CBS-affiliated stations would shift Sawyer to 4 or 4:30 P.M. Thus she would not be live but would probably have to tape the show at 2:30 P.M. Inevitably, news that broke in the afternoon would be excluded.

Stringer, at CBS, concedes that obstacles exist. "No question, I have to start small," he says, agreeing that Sawyer would have to tape the show. Instead of focussing on the negatives, Stringer, who lured David Letterman away from NBC in December of 1992, argues for boldness. "This is a business of imitation," he says. "All research says you can't do something because it's not done now. The most important network news programs—'60 Minutes,' 'Sunday Morning,' and 'Nightline'—all began to a chorus of low expectations. They were in local-access time. This idea is going to work. It's going to work because from 7 to 8 P.M. is now a wasteland. Outside of 'MacNeil/Lehrer,' there is no food there for the brain or the soul."

No matter who wins, the bidding for Sawyer is likely to escalate demands from all other marquee names. "The dollars will continue to get bigger for the stars, and will be reduced for everyone else," a television talent agent says. This is already the pattern in book publishing and records and movies: in those fields, everyone pursues big names because it is now presumed that hits will carry the rest of the business. These businesses have in common a yearning for brand names. With more channels and movies and games and home-shopping and sports and computer bulletin boards to choose from, brand names like Sawyer and Madden stand out. "Uniqueness and distinctiveness become more and more important as people are confronted by multiple choices," Eric Ober, the president of CBS News, says. And Arledge says, "If five hundred new colas were introduced tomorrow, Coca-Cola would be more important than ever. The dependable, well-established brands survive—unless they self-destruct."

And for those on the inside brand names become a royal pain—a source of internal friction between the haves and the have-nots, a financial drain, an endless array of egos to stroke and insecurities to mend. They provide trophies—a way for companies to claim victories even when they lose money.

It is no wonder that Daniel Burke, the president and chief executive officer of Capital Cities/ABC, who will retire next week after thirty-three years at Capital Cities, is not at all wistful about his impending departure. "I suspect that people feared the worst when Barbara Walters broke the million-dollar barrier in news," he says. "Yet the republic stood. Nevertheless, this is a part of the network business that I won't miss." ♦

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PROFILE

THE EXILE RETURNS

Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn posed such a threat to the Soviet Politburo that it exiled him after the publication of "The Gulag Archipelago," but for twenty years the West was also a reluctant audience for his uncompromising views. Now, having completed his historical opus, the author is going home, to seek a role in the new Russia.

BY DAVID REMNICK

ON the morning of January 7, 1974, the leadership of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union convened to draw up battle plans against a grave threat to Communist ideology and power—a writer and his manuscript. Leonid Ilyich Brezhnev, the General Secretary of the Party, sat at the head of the conference table and opened the meeting. "Comrades," he began, "according to our sources abroad and the foreign press, Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn has published a new work in France and in the United States—'The Gulag Archipelago.' "

By then, Brezhnev's health was beginning to fail. He worked only four or five hours a day, his burden soothed by frequent naps, massages, saunas, and snacks, and by round-the-clock attention from his doctors. His speech was slow, slurred. "I am told by Comrade Suslov that the Secretariat has taken a decision to develop in our press a debunking operation against this work by Solzhenitsyn and its appearance in bourgeois propaganda," Brezhnev went on. "No one has had a chance to read the book, but its essential contents are already known. It is a filthy anti-Soviet slander. We have to determine what to do about Solzhenitsyn. By law, we have every basis for putting him in jail. He has tried to undermine all we hold sacred: Lenin, the Soviet system, Soviet power—everything dear to us. . . . This hooligan Solzhenitsyn is out of control."

Yuri Andropov, the chief of the K.G.B. at the time and a future successor to the Party throne, did not wait long before offering his recommendation. He was by far the most intelligent of the Politburo members, and it is plain from reading the minutes of the Politburo session (a stack of classified documents stamped "Top Secret" in the Party archives) that Andropov's was the decisive voice. Better than anyone else, he understood the threat Solzhenitsyn's work posed to the regime. Back in 1962, when Nikita Khrushchev approved the publication of Solzhenitsyn's "One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich," as a way of discrediting the Stalin era, a great cultural thaw had already begun—one that so unnerved the Communist leaders that they eventually called it off, banned Solzhenitsyn from print, and, in 1964, "retired" Khrushchev "for reasons of health." But Solzhenitsyn's literary mission, the process of giving voice to the sixty million victims of Soviet terror, went on secretly, and even collectively. Much of "Gulag" was based on the hundreds of letters and memoirs that former prisoners had mailed to Solzhenitsyn after "One Day" was published. Andropov had an intuitive sense that this new work could do as much, in its way, to undermine Soviet power as all the nuclear arsenals in the West.

"I think Solzhenitsyn should be deported from the country without his consent," Andropov said, according to the Politburo minutes. "Trotsky was deported in his time without getting his agreement. . . . Everyone is watching us to see what we will do with Solzhenitsyn—if we will mete out punishment to him or if we will just leave him alone. . . . I maintain that we must take legal action and bring the full force of Soviet law against him."

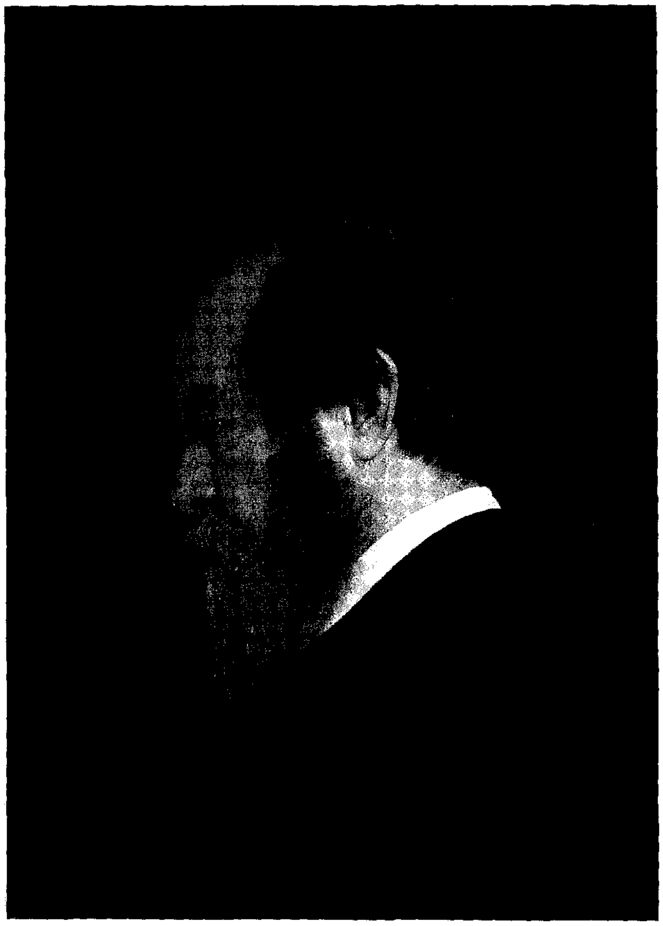
Andropov then fuelled the already evident anger of the other members with terse descriptions of Solzhenitsyn's "impudence"—his meetings with foreign correspondents, his brazen flouting of Party control over literature and over publication abroad. (The manuscripts of "Gulag" and other works had been microfilmed by Solzhenitsyn and his wife in Moscow and smuggled by friends and other contacts of theirs to publishers in the West.)

Nikolai Podgorny, the chairman of the Presidium, was furious, and indignantly defended Andropov's proposal to suppress Solzhenitsyn against any prospect of a righteous response abroad. "In China, there are public executions," he said. "In Chile, the Fascist regime shoots and tortures people! In Ireland, the English use repression on the working people! We must deal with an enemy who gets away with slinging mud at everybody."

"We can send Solzhenitsyn away to serve his sentence in Verkhoyansk," beyond the Arctic Circle, said Alexei Kosygin, the Soviet Premier, a "liberal" in the eyes of many foreign analysts. "Not a single foreign correspondent will go visit him there, because it's so cold."

No matter what was done, Brezhnev said, the Solzhenitsyn affair would pass. The regime was unshakable. "In our time"—in 1968—"we did not worry about acting against the counterrevolution in Czechoslovakia," he said. "We did not worry about throwing out Alliluyeva"—Stalin's rebellious daughter, Svetlana. "We survived it all. And I think we'll live through this."

As the General Secretary droned on, the object of the Politburo's fury was at work, writing in a small extra room of a friend's dacha in the village of Peredelkino, about a half hour's drive west of Moscow. As he had been doing since his prison days, he wrote in a tiny scrawl, in small notebooks, the better to conceal his notes and manuscripts in the event of a search; after a day's work, he would go into the garden of the dacha and burn his early drafts. Solzhenitsyn had always been an avid listener to foreign radio stations on shortwave, and when he heard the news that "Gulag" had been published abroad he allowed himself just a moment's satisfaction. Then he went back to his writing table. Remarkably, he was able to shut out the world—the world of the Politburo, of denunciations, of censorship—and work fourteen to sixteen hours a day. While his wife and their three young sons stayed at their apartment, in downtown Moscow, Solzhenitsyn was spending six days a week in Peredelkino, as a guest of the family's close friend Lidiya Chukovskaya, who was the author of "The Deserted House," a remarkable short novel about Stalin's purges. In Peredelkino, the light was better, and there were no children, no phone calls, to distract him.



Solzhenitsyn in Vermont: "I am sure that I will not have the chance to work so calmly again. I know that I will be torn apart by people's tragedies and the events of the time."

KRAWCZYK

"Aleksandr Isayevich slept and worked in an extra room and kept a pitchfork near his bed, as if that would protect him against an attack," Chukovskaya told me many years later, at her apartment in Moscow. She recalled how solicitous he was of her, how reluctant he was to disturb her work. Sometimes Chukovskaya would wander into the kitchen and find a note taped to the refrigerator door: "If you are free at nine, let's listen to the radio together." Sometimes Solzhenitsyn would go outside for a walk, but never through the village. Instead, he would pace back and forth across the dacha's small garden. When Chukovskaya asked him if he ever grew bored wearing the same tracks in the turf, he said, "No. I got used to it in jail."

"Wherever Solzhenitsyn happened to dwell and wherever fate cast him, he never for a moment ceased to be the absolute master of his own life," Chukovskaya once wrote. His working schedule was broken down not by the hour but by the minute. "A long chat (except about work, or the creative process) would have been relaxation, idleness—and Solzhenitsyn and idleness are two quite incompatible things. It was as if, at a certain moment (I do not know why or when), he had sentenced himself to imprisonment in some strict regime camp, and was now rigidly enforcing that regime. He was convict and guard rolled into one, and his own surveillance of himself was perhaps more relentless than that of the K.G.B."

Not only was "Gulag" now out in the West; it was also being read in Russian over Radio Liberty—a phenomenon that insured even greater outrage in the Kremlin. Yet, despite the sensation, Solzhenitsyn did not sense quite how precarious his situation, and his family's, had become. He was not completely naïve: On New Year's Day of 1974, he had drawn up a list of possible reprisals that the regime might take against him—a list that included imprisonment, internal exile, and even murder, but he thought a press campaign and petty harassment the most likely punishment. He had no idea that the Party was now choosing among the most Draconian options.

On February 7th—just a month after that first Kremlin meeting—he wrote in his diary, "Forecast for February: Apart from attempts to discredit me, they aren't likely to do anything, and there will probably be a breathing space."

That same day, Andropov sent a top-priority memo to Brezhnev saying that the West German Chancellor, Willy Brandt, was willing to accept Solzhenitsyn as an exile. "We have to act quickly, before Brandt changes his mind or Solzhenitsyn gets wind of the plan," Andropov said. "There will be costs, but unfortunately we have no alternative. The unlawful acts Solzhenitsyn has already committed have inflicted on us costs more profound than those which will come up abroad in the case of expulsion or arrest." Andropov began mapping out a minute-by-minute plan to arrest Solzhenitsyn and hustle him out of the country before he or his family had a chance to react.

Late in the afternoon of February 13th, Solzhenitsyn, who had returned to the family apartment, was arrested there, and locked in a cell of the Lefortovo Prison. Later that evening, he was charged with treason, and the next day K.G.B. guards shuttled him to Sheremetevo Airport and put him on an Aeroflot jet bound for Frankfurt. The plane had been delayed on the ground for three hours in Moscow, the passengers were told, because of "the fog."

For many years now, a sign has been hanging outside the Cavendish General Store, in southern Vermont:

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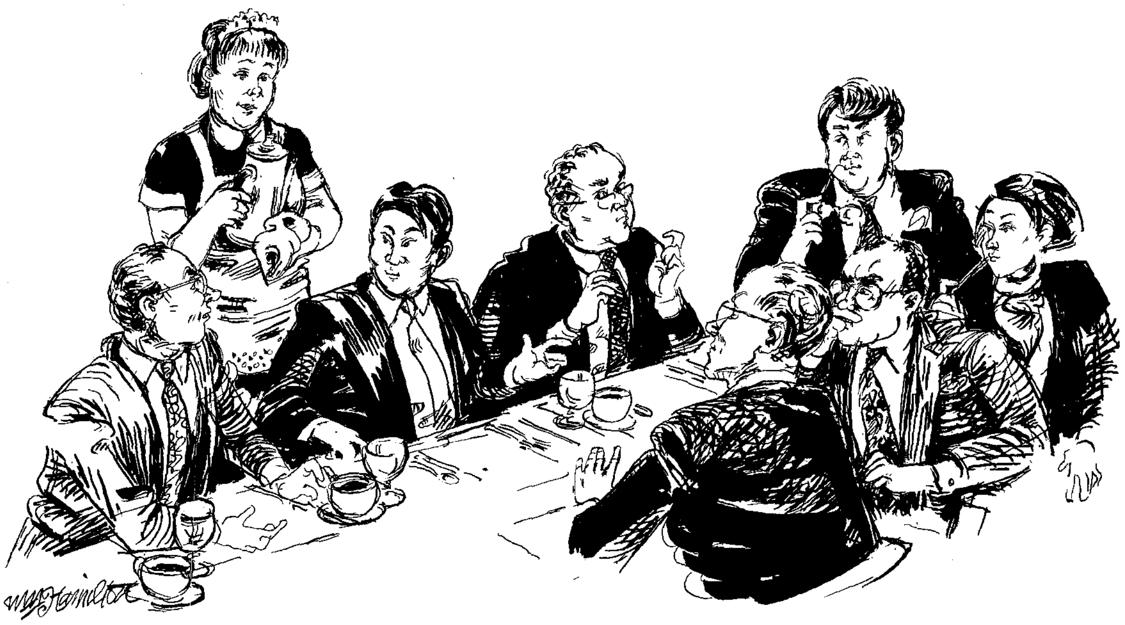

"Breakfast will be a little late. Our computer's down."

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hundred and twenty-three of them—have been vigilant in protecting the privacy of their Nobel Prize winner. When James Jeffords, the state's Republican senator, who was then in the House of Representatives, came to visit some years ago, he had to explain at length his station in Washington before anyone would help him find the Solzhenitsyn house.

"They say the family is moving back to Russia come May," the counterman at the general store told me this winter. "I'm thinking of taking down the sign and seeing what it'll get at Sotheby's."

Cavendish was in a deep freeze when I arrived in town. The bed-and-breakfast places in the area were filling up, mostly with skiers heading for the slopes in Ludlow, two towns to the west. A few snowmobiles ripped through the hills. That evening, I ate dinner at a local restaurant, with a pro-football game blaring on screens in every corner. As I watched John Madden work the telestrator, it seemed inconceivable that just a couple of miles away Solzhenitsyn was in his workroom, writing. Certainly it was not strange that a writer lived in Cavendish: after all, what place would better fulfill the perennial literary fantasy of escape and quiet?—but this was Solzhenitsyn, a survivor of the camps, who knows nothing of John Madden, nothing of Beavis and Butt-head or "Private Parts," who speaks little English and rarely leaves his property. I was unnerved knowing that just up the road, in the hills, was the man who wrote this sentence (in "Gulag") about the inability of the comfortable to imagine the capacities of evil:

> If the intellectuals in the plays of Chekhov who spent all their time guessing what would happen in twenty, thirty, or forty years had been told that in forty years interrogation by torture would be practiced in Russia; that prisoners would have their skulls squeezed within iron rings, that a human being would be lowered into an acid bath; that they would be trussed up naked to be bitten by ants and bedbugs; that a ramrod heated over a primus stove would be thrust up their anal canal (the "secret brand"); that a man's genitals would be slowly crushed beneath the toe of a jackboot; and that, in the luckiest possible circumstances, prisoners would be tortured by being kept from sleeping for a week, by thirst, and by being beaten to a bloody pulp, not one of Chekhov's plays would have gotten to its end because all the heroes would have gone off to insane asylums.

Solzhenitsyn's exile in America remains, to the last, an astonishment. Living in what must be the most serene state in the union is a Russian whose destiny is singular and, at the same time, nearly identical to Russia's. Solzhenitsyn, born in 1918, just months after the Revolution, was a captain on the East Prussian front during the Second World War, and survived; he was arrested in 1945 for making jokes in letters to a friend about Stalin ("the man with the mustache") and was sentenced to a total of eight years in the Gulag (spending one year in a prisoners' research center) and to "perpetual" internal exile in Kazakhstan, and survived; while he was still in Kazakhstan, he also survived a case of stomach cancer that doctors assured him was terminal; and, despite the best efforts of the Politburo, he not only survived his battle with Soviet power but won it. Now, after twenty years in exile, at the age of seventy-five, he is returning home. Solzhenitsyn will die in Russia, not a pariah but a free man. Is it too much of an embarrassment in the age of irony to think that his homecoming is somehow Biblical?

THE next morning, I turned off the main street in Cavendish and headed up a steep road, past power lines, past a graveyard, past trailers and rotting tractors and handsome vacation houses, to the fence surrounding Solzhenitsyn's property, his mythic barrier against the world. In Russia, and even in the West, the legend was that the fence was huge, forbidding, perhaps electrified, as if it guarded a prison camp. When he first moved to Cavendish, the Washington *Post* headline was "Solzhenitsyn's Barbed-Wire Freedom." The fence turned out to be nothing much, a pitiable chain-link job. After moving in, Solzhenitsyn came to a town meeting in 1976 and apologized to his neighbors for getting in the way of snowmobilers and hunters: "I am sorry for that and ask you to forgive me, but I had to protect myself from certain types of disturbances." He said he did not expect to be bothering them long: "The Russian people dream of the day when they can be liberated from the Soviet system, and when that day comes I will thank you very much for being good friends and neighbors and will go home."

The driveway winds past a brook, now frozen and banked with snow. Down a slope, there is a small waterfall, a pond, a tennis court. Solzhenitsyn had always dreamed of having a court, but it seems that he finds fifteen minutes of play quite enough. His wife used to make fun of him for wanting to play such a "bourgeois game," and his sons long ago nailed a proletarian basketball hoop over the garage door.

"Thank goodness you found us," Natalia Dmitriyevna Solzhenitsyn said, in Russian. "I thought you got lost."

"I did, a little."

"Well, it happens all the time."

"The birches here look Russian," I said.

"But they aren't, really," she said. "The birches here are fat, even a little gnarled. In Russia, they are tall and thin and straight."

Natalia Dmitriyevna is a handsome woman in her mid-fifties. She began her professional life as a mathematician, but when she married Solzhenitsyn, in 1973 (both had been married once before), she became absolutely vital to his work, and to his existence. She is his assistant, his editor, his mediator with the outside world, his lion at the gate—a woman of fierce energy. In the days between his exile and her own, she managed to smuggle his entire archive, a vast trove of papers compiled over decades, from Moscow to Zurich. She has raised four children and runs the household with only the help of her mother, Ekaterina Svetlova.

Thanks to the vigilance of Cavendish and Natalia Dmitriyevna, Solzhenitsyn works undisturbed, adhering to the same schedule every day of the year. He wakes at around six, has a cup of coffee, and begins work. There is a lunch break in the afternoon, and he continues working until late in the evening, sometimes through the night. He works, eats, and sleeps, and that is about all. For him to accept a telephone call is an event. He rarely leaves his fifty acres; home is all he needs. After the family bought the house—an old two-story farmhouse—in 1976, they built a three-story "working house" next door. In bad weather, Solzhenitsyn does not even have to go outside to get there. The houses are connected by a long concrete tunnel that joins the two basements. The main house is comfortable, yet unspectacular; it looks like a modest ski lodge, airy and filled with light, but the furniture is absolutely ordinary, functional, and the floors are carpeted in plain, almost industrial, colors. Solzhenitsyn's books have been published in more than thirty languages, so the family is quite prosperous, even though all the royalties from "Gulag," by far his top-selling book, are channelled into a fund used to aid political prisoners and their families. The Russian Social Fund, which Natalia administers, "is far richer than we are," she said.

There is something at once frenetic and peaceful about the Solzhenitsyn household. Everyone has a job to do, and everyone does it with efficiency and evident pleasure. Upstairs, Natalia has her own office, where she runs what is, in essence, a literary factory. For Solzhenitsyn's latest works, she sets the type on an I.B.M. composing machine, and then she sends the typeset pages to Paris, where their friend Nikita Struve runs the Russian-language YMCA-Press. Struve has only to photograph the set pages, print them, and bind them. Natalia has set all twenty volumes of Solzhenitsyn's *sobranie sochineny*—his collected works. Only now that Solzhenitsyn has completed his series of immense historical novels, "The Red Wheel," is either author or amanuensis able to concentrate on the move back to Moscow.

The children—Yermolai, Ignat, and Stephan, and their older half brother, Dmitri Turin—have also been very much a part of the Solzhenitsyn enterprise. During the family's first years in Cavendish, they began the day with a prayer for Russia to be saved from its oppressors. They went to local schools, and when they came home in the afternoon their father gave them further lessons in mathematics and the sciences (Solzhenitsyn had been a schoolteacher in Russia) and their mother tutored them in Russian language and literature. Until the boys began leaving home for boarding schools and college, they, too, helped with literary chores, setting type, compiling volumes of Russian memoirs, translating speeches. Now they are spread across the world. Dmitri lives in New York, where he restores and sells vintage motorcycles. Yermolai, after two years at Eton, went to Harvard, and while he was there he studied Chinese and had a part-time job as a bouncer at the Bow & Arrow, a Cambridge bar; he is now living in Taiwan and wants to begin working soon in China. Ignat is studying piano and conducting at the Curtis Institute of Music, in Philadelphia, and has performed around the world, to spectacular reviews, including a series of triumphant concerts with his father's old friend Mstislav Rostropovich last September in Russia and the Baltic states. Stephan is a junior at Harvard and is majoring in urban planning.

Ignat and Stephan were home for winter vacation, and I asked them if their father ever stopped working.

Ignat smiled slyly and replied, "No, he's never said, 'Today I'm just gonna chill out, take a jog, and blow off this "Red Wheel" thing.' Not one day."

"Chilling out is not exactly his thing," Stephan added.

"So, fine. Why can't the West get over this?" Ignat said, growing more serious. "Why is his working all the time such an annoyance? Why is it so bad that he lives in Vermont and not the middle of Manhattan?"

"They assume he must be weird," Stephan said.

Natalia led me to the working house, where Solzhenitsyn was waiting. While he was writing "The Red Wheel," he often stayed in the working house for many days straight, replicating the way he would hole up for weeks and months at various dachas in and around Moscow before his exile. The first floor has its own Russian Orthodox chapel, with skylights and icons, and there is also a library of books and documents that Solzhenitsyn gathered for use in "The Red Wheel." Sometimes he works on the third floor, where there is a vast skylight, but in winter the room is frigid. We met in his main work area, on the second floor.

Even physically, Solzhenitsyn is a figure out of time. He has an astonishing nineteenth-century face: a Tolstoyan beard; blue, almost Asiatic, eyes; thinning, swept-back hair. In recent years, though his face has grown more lined and he has gained weight, he still does not look seventy-five but, rather, looks lived-in—at ease in an old brown cardigan and a woollen shirt. We sat across from each other at a small table, where he had prepared himself for our talks with a set of handwritten notes and a few volumes of his collected works, sprouting bookmarks. I asked him if he had read the documents describing how the leadership decided on his exile.

Solzhenitsyn nodded. “It is strange, but we did not foresee this last step,” he said, in a voice that seemed too high-pitched for his grave face and his presence.“My wife and I had become so impertinent. We felt that nothing would happen to us, and we would manage once more to stay on our feet. The pressure had reached such a high level, but, even so, various friends came to our place and said, ‘You know, it’s extraordinary, there is such tension all around, and yet here there is peace and quiet and the children are falling asleep.’ So, yes, in this instance my intuition failed me.”

Where Solzhenitsyn’s intuition proved keenest was in his prediction when he arrived in the West that his books would surely be published in the Soviet Union and, what was more, that he would himself return to a liberated Russia. In the depths of the Cold War, he told Malcolm Muggeridge, on the BBC, “In a strange way, I not only hope, I am inwardly convinced that I shall go back. I live with that conviction. I mean my physical return, not just my books. And that contradicts all rationality.” It was a firm and intimate belief that even contradicted Solzhenitsyn’s dire analysis of Soviet ruthlessness and Western accommodation. During the two years the Solzhenitsyns lived in Zurich, friends in Europe remember thinking that the exile was indulging in delusions when he spoke of inevitable return. “When I met with him in Zurich just after he was exiled, in one of the very first conversations we had, he said, ‘I see the day when I will return to Russia,’ ” Nikita Struve had told me in Paris. “It seemed crazy at the time to me, but it was a real conviction, a poet’s knowledge. He *sees.* The man *sees.*”

“It’s true. In my heart, I sensed that I would return,” Solzhenitsyn was saying now. “All of us in prison in the forties were certain that Communism would fall. The only question was when. Perhaps I even exaggerated the danger of Communism, perhaps even consciously, to inspire the West to stand more firmly. But remember—countries were falling to Communism one after another.”

TRAVELLER

(St. Lucia, 1985)

She wasn’t prepared for the torrential rain
and unflagging wind,
the laughable moon swaying
like a paper lantern over a chain-link fence.

She wasn’t prepared for the “tropical” décor
of the hotel lobby
or the crumbling wooden pier
or the tawdriness of things in the market.

Those hordes of noisy children following her
along the shore,
that unruly one-armed beggar.
Outsized oleanders. Nosy fellow-tourists.

She sat at a table writing postcards home
about the glass-strewn beach
where music blasted
from cruise ships in the early evening

and the clouds thickened into darkness.
Ghostly afternoons sipping tea
and munching cookies;
thunderous nights when lightning flashed

above the rooftops slanting in the distance
and trees huddled near
the edge of the road.
Wild hibiscus knelt beside her window.

She saw herself folding a floral dress
across a cane chair,
turning back the sheets,
and lying in a narrow bed far from home

where she counted sheep for hours on end
and felt the salt spray
clinging to her skin
as her body dissolved in disappointment.

She never expected to waken and find the world
intact, the sun prying open
the flimsy curtains
and flaring up—luminous, persistent, unabashed.

—Edward Hirsch

Ignat, who sat down at his father’s side, smiled at this last remark, as if he were remembering something fondly. In fact, he was. Later, he told me how when the boys were newly arrived in Vermont their father sat with them on a boulder on their property and told them that the rock was really a flying horse and that when the time was right it would fly them all back to Russia.

“I always trusted Aleksandr Isayevich’s feeling, his intuition, that we would return,” Natalia Solzhenitsyn said. “He has this uncanny ability to see certain things that I do not and most people do not. It is not mystical. There is just a certain level of profundity that sets him apart. But I have to admit there were times when my own faith weakened. In the early eighties, when there was a new wave of arrests, when Andropov came to power, things looked very grim. Those were dark times, and it was very hard to believe that we'd be going home. I was losing faith."

That faith returned only gradually in the mid-nineteen-eighties, as the Soviet Union began showing some signs of reform under Mikhail Gorbachev. But even then maintaining it was not easy. As glasnost flourished, in 1988, Solzhenitsyn's works were excluded from the process. At the time, I asked Yegor Ligachev, the most powerful conservative in the Politburo, why the leadership had so far refused to publish Solzhenitsyn, and he grew angry—every bit as fierce as Andropov had been fourteen years earlier.

"We have sacred things, just as you do," Ligachev said.

But it was not just a question of the conservatives. Even the self-described liberals in the leadership could not face the prospect of permitting the publication of Solzhenitsyn's books in the Soviet Union. In the autumn of 1988, Sergei Zalygin, the editor of the journal *Novy Mir*, thought he had the tacit approval of the leadership to publish Solzhenitsyn, and he printed an announcement on the back cover saying that the process would begin in future issues. In the middle of the night, *Novy Mir's* printers got a "stop work" order from the Central Committee, and the covers, at great expense, were torn off more than a million copies of the magazine. The Politburo's ideology chief, Vadim Medvedev, told a press conference soon after that that Solzhenitsyn's works were impermissible, since "they undermine the foundations on which our present life rests." It was only in late 1989, when the regime had clearly lost its hold on society, that Gorbachev let Zalygin go forward. Solzhenitsyn insisted that *Novy Mir* begin with "Gulag."

Solzhenitsyn did not return to Russia at the first opportunity, mainly because he did not see how rushing home, and jeopardizing the chance to finish "The Red Wheel," would help anyone. Instead, like the rest of the world, he followed the fall of the Soviet Union in the press and on television.

"In August of 1991, my wife and I were incredibly excited to watch Dzerzhinsky's statue taken down outside the K.G.B. building," he said. "That, of course, was a great moment for us. But I was asked at the time, 'Why didn't you send a telegram of congratulations?' You know, I felt deep inside that this was not yet a victory. I knew how deeply Communism had penetrated into the fabric of life. Afterward, for two years, we tap-danced about, and what were we doing? What was Yeltsin doing? We forgot everything else and fought one another. The same is true now. All is in decay. It's too early to celebrate. Why was I silent about Gorbachev for several years? Thank God, something did begin! But everything that began was done wrongly. So what do you do? Celebrate or weep? What can you say? I could not have gone over there and had a glass of champagne with Yeltsin in front of the parliament, the White House. The heart is not yet joyful."

Solzhenitsyn finished the fourth volume of "The Red Wheel" in late 1991—the series runs to more than five thousand pages—and I asked him (against the evidence) if exile had depleted his language and imagination.

"The thing is, I came to the West when I was fifty-five years old," he said. "I had had an amazingly rich and varied experience of life. As a writer, I did not need any addition to this experience but, rather, the time to process it. Purely for my work, the eighteen years in Vermont have been the happiest of my life. Simply put, over eighteen years I have not had one creative drought. Seven days a week, three hundred and sixty-five days a year, without holidays or vacations, I worked, and that's all there is to it. Such conditions, from this point of view, in terms of books and writing and just day-to-day life, I had never had before and will never have again. This was the richest period of my creative work.

"The loss was the pain inside me, the separation from the homeland, from its spaces and people, from interaction. Raising children as Russians in the West was extremely difficult, and it is only thanks to Natalia Dmitriyevna that we have been able to do this, because one usually becomes engulfed in the country in which one lives. So this was our loss. Now, when we are about to go back to Russia, we hope to recover from this loss, but not in the sense that the pain will go away. In fact, the pain will only increase, because of the horrifying circumstances in Russia. One might

have thought that after the fall of Communism Russia would encounter serious problems. But it was hard to imagine that with leader after leader, and year after year, everything would worsen continuously. We are faced with incredible hardship for years to come. I am sure that I will not have the chance to work so calmly again. I know that I will be torn apart by people's tragedies and the events of the time."

But what of his language? Many exiles say that this is the most telling loss.

"I have always been surrounded here by Russian manuscripts, and I write in Russian," he said. "I studied English and German as a schoolboy, but I have not been able to study them further since coming to the West. I do read in English and German, but I was not able to develop my conversational skills. If I need to read letters in those languages, or articles, I do it. I am constantly immersed in the Russian language." Gesturing toward the woods and the fields of snow outside the window, he said, "And we really have a piece of Russia here. Once, my wife and I travelled across this country from the Pacific to the Atlantic; then I went by myself to conduct research—to the Midwest, mostly. But I simply could not allow myself the time to take a trip around America just to get to know the country. I had only two choices: to write 'The Red Wheel' or not. To write it, I had to give it my full attention. Maybe, if I were not returning now to Russia, I might change my life style on account of finishing 'The Red Wheel.' But now it is time to go back to Russia. There simply was not the time. One cannot encompass everything. Our history has been so hidden. I had to dig so deep, I had to uncover what was buried and sealed. This took up all my years."

IN terms of the effect he has had on history, Solzhenitsyn is the dominant writer of this century. Who else compares? Orwell? Koestler? And yet when his name comes up now it is more often than not as a freak, a monarchist, an anti-Semite, a crank, a has-been, and not as a hero. One afternoon in Cavendish, I was in the kitchen with Natalia and Stephan, and I asked if Solzhenitsyn planned to make any public appearances, any speeches, before leaving Vermont for Moscow this spring.

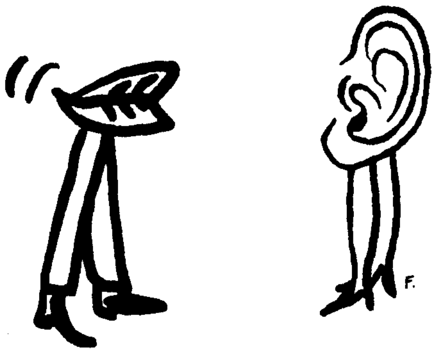
"Who would ask him to speak in America?" Natalia said. "Who in America wants to hear him?"

"Face it, Mom," Stephan said. "It hasn't worked out here."

Solzhenitsyn chose to live in the United States mainly because of its *prostranstvo*, its size and space. In Paris, Nikita Struve told me, "Aleksandr Isayevich went to America so he could live far from the world—the world not in the religious sense but in the most ordinary sense. You could never do that in Switzerland or France. When everything is close together like that, anyone can just drop by and knock on the door, ring the buzzer. In Vermont, it's not so easy. He lives, and has always lived, like an *otshelnik*, a hermit. Like a monk. No one has ever done this to quite the same extent. People said Gogol was crazy when he didn't go out. But, look, great writers are almost always considered crazy. Great writers are a different sort of people."

I told Struve what he already knew—that Solzhenitsyn's reception in the United States had been troubled from the very start.

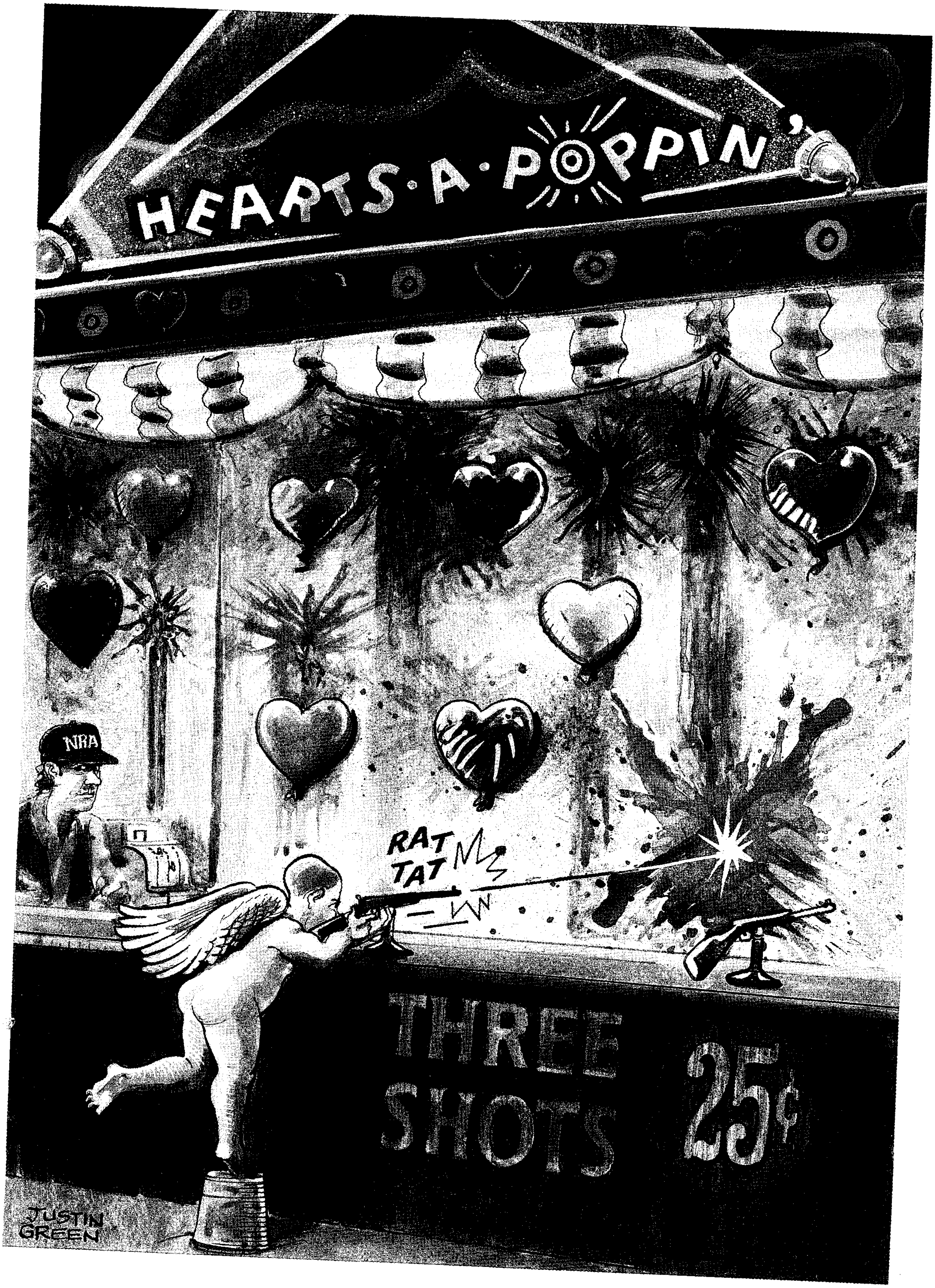
"Americans do not generally live with fences around their homes, and Americans want you to live the way they do," Struve said. "There are always a lot of people who resent it when there is someone in their midst who is higher than they are. The man in question must be crazy, because he doesn't come out and live among them. Solzhenitsyn lived in America as if it were always foreign. And this Americans didn't like. He lived in Vermont, but it was his special Vermont. He didn't have to 'get to know' the West. He never went about making himself into a great 'Western thinker.' That just was not his job in life. Solzhenitsyn was at war against Soviet power—the pen against power. This was his literary work, and he carried it out absolutely."



Soon after his arrival in this country, Solzhenitsyn accepted invitations to speak to the A.F.L.-C.I.O. in New York and Washington, at the Hoover Institution, in California, and, most notoriously, at the 1978 Harvard graduation ceremonies. In those speeches he excoriated the West not only for weakness in its negotiations with the Soviet Union but also for a general cultural and civil collapse. To him, the rot of Western life was evident in billboards and tabloids, in the lyrics of rock music and the exploits of Daniel Ellsberg. He delivered those perorations in an elevated, angry, almost Grand Inquisitor-like tone, a tone rarely heard in the West. Here he was, in a typical pitch, at Hoover:

> Freedom! To fill people's mailboxes, eyes, ears, and brains with commercial rubbish against their will, television programs that are impossible to watch with a sense of coherence. Freedom! To force information on people, taking no account of their right *not* to accept it or their right to peace of mind. Freedom! To spit in the eyes and souls of passersby with advertisements. Freedom! For publishers and film producers to poison the younger generations with corrupting filth. Freedom! For adolescents of fourteen to eighteen to immerse themselves in idleness and pleasure instead of intensive study and spiritual growth. . . . Freedom! To divulge the defense secrets of one's country for personal political gain.

Somehow, it was all too fierce and sarcastic, too impolitic. This was not Sakharov; this was not a lovable man. Solzhenitsyn gave Americans little reason to relax or to admire themselves. Two of his supporters, the scholars John Ericson, of Calvin College, and John Dunlop, of the Hoover Institution, have compiled book-length collections of writing largely about the reaction to Solzhenitsyn in the West. Even in the years before Solzhenitsyn arrived in this country, the attacks came from high and low, and they were endless. In 1974, before becoming the main book critic at the Washington *Post*, Jonathan Yardley wrote for the Knight-Ridder chain that Solzhenitsyn was a "not-very-thinly-disguised Czarist." Writing the next year in the *Guardian*, Simon Winchester referred to Solzhenitsyn as the "shaggy author" and the "hairy polemicist," and declared that he had become "the darling of the redneck


HEARTS·A·POPPIN'
NRA
RAT TAT
THREE SHOTS
25¢
JUSTIN GREEN

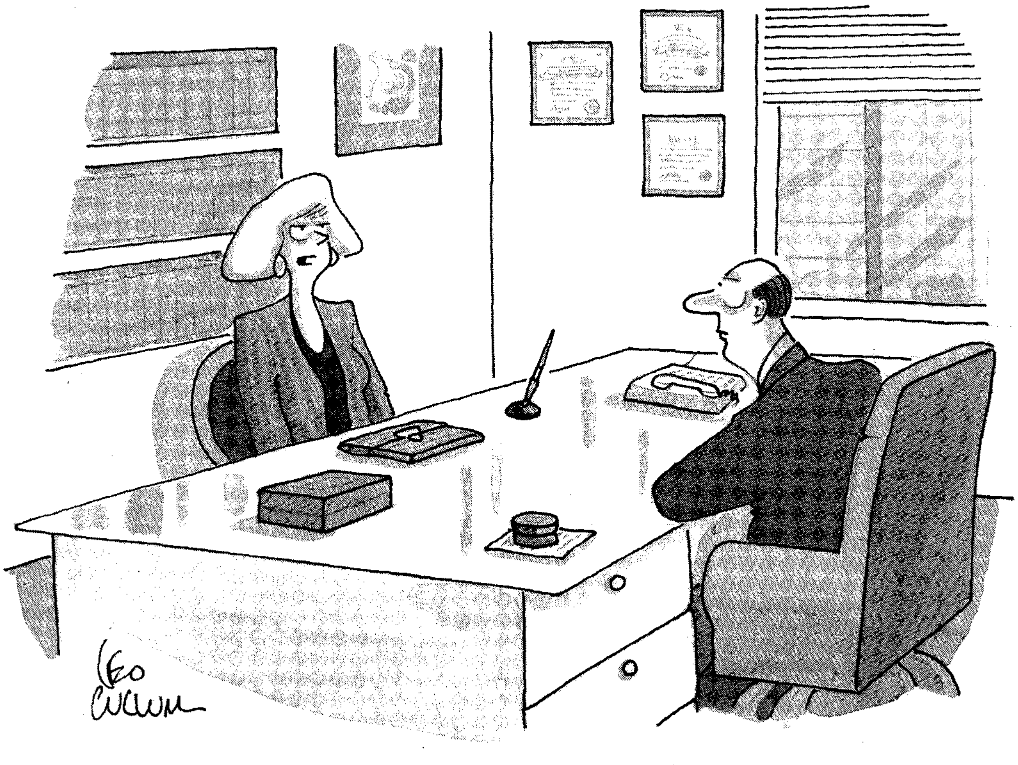
population." There was this headline in the London *Daily Mirror* in 1976: "SOLZHENITWIT." Writing in the London *Sunday Times*, Alan Brien reviewed the essay "Letter to the Soviet Leaders" with total disdain: "Is Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn a crank? His open, unopened letter to the Soviet Government certainly bears a superficial resemblance to those lengthy screeds which flop on the desk of every journalist from time to time, even down to the passages underscored and printed in capitals, full of contradictory assertions, obsessive fears, Falstaffian escalations of statistics." And on it went, year after year. As recently as 1993, the Boston *Globe's* former Moscow correspondent, Alex Beam, published an opinion piece in the paper under the headline "SHUT UP, SOLZHENITSYN."

Some Russian émigrés also came to resent Solzhenitsyn, partly because he showed them no great sympathy and had urged them to stay in the Soviet Union. His exile, he argued, was unique, because it had been forced—as if dozens of dissidents had not been given a choice between departure and brutal punishment. The comic novelist Vladimir Voinovich, who lives in Germany, portrayed in his novel "Moscow 2042" a Solzhenitsyn-like figure as a combination of imam and holy fool. "At a certain point, Solzhenitsyn's quality of being uncompromising in his struggle against the system became something else," Voinovich told me. "I began to notice an atmosphere of authoritarian impulses even in his work, and certainly in his demeanor. I defended him, but after a while I got the impression that after he had written anything or said anything you either had to fall in line and agree or you were an enemy. He could be so unjust, unceremoniously casting people out of his circle for some slight, usually imagined."

Vasily Aksyonov, an émigré who is the author of "The Burn" and many other novels, and who is more sympathetic to Solzhenitsyn, said that the prickly relations with the outside world were natural. "Solzhenitsyn's greatest problem is his isolation," Aksyonov said. "Look at J. D. Salinger. People assume that because Salinger has holed himself up in the country and made an obsession of that isolation he must be crazy. The same with Solzhenitsyn. He is like some sort of owl up there in the woods. And so, even though people can be unfair, he, too, is to blame for the negative myth. The couple of times I have seen him on television, he has turned out to be a perfectly normal, truthful person. He is not a living monument."

One of the absolute low points of Solzhenitsyn's reception in the West occurred at the highest levels. For a while, in 1975, President Gerald Ford considered inviting Solzhenitsyn to the White House, but he and his advisers soon thought better of it. The Secretary of State, Henry Kissinger, sent a memo through his executive assistant, George Springsteen, to Ford's national-security adviser, Brent Scowcroft, saying, "Solzhenitsyn is a notable writer, but his political views are an embarrassment even to his fellow-dissidents. Not only would a meeting with the President offend the Soviets but it would raise some controversy about Solzhenitsyn's views of the United States and its allies. . . . We recommend that the President not receive Solzhenitsyn." When I called Ford in Colorado recently to ask about the incident, he spoke blandly about the need to avoid offending the Kremlin during sensitive arms negotiations. "It's the old never-ending conflict between foreign-policy concerns and domestic political concerns," he said. "As a matter of principle, we made the right decision." But it seems that he was rather less measured about it at the time. According to his former press secretary, Ron Nessen, Ford called Solzhenitsyn "a goddamn horse's ass" and said that the author wanted to come to the White House merely to get more lecture dates and publicize his books.

No one enjoyed Solzhenitsyn's dismal clashes in the West more than his former tormentors. In a memorandum to the Council of Ministers dated January 4, 1976, the K.G.B. chief, Andropov, wrote gleefully about Solzhenitsyn and "the fall in interest in him abroad and in the U.S.S.R." Andropov admitted in the memo that the K.G.B. had helped promote, through its agents and contacts, "material useful to us" condemning Solzhenitsyn and his "class-based hatred of the Soviet power." Andropov was pleased to report that the compromising material, much of it insisting that Solzhenitsyn was an anti-Semite yearning for a return



"I'd like to have myself declared legally blonde."

of the czars, "has brought about a reevaluation of his personality and has successfully brought up, and strengthened, doubts about the reliability of his distorted 'work.' "

CURTIS WAYSIDE
CURTIS' WAYSIDE
KOREN

"What do you have that's rich in antioxidants?"

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What the K.G.B. did not point out was that Solzhenitsyn's reception was actually varied. In Europe, and especially in France, the publication of "Gulag" and the exile itself in 1974 immediately changed the intellectual landscape. Suddenly, a generation that had grown up under the spell of Jean-Paul Sartre's brand of leftism and a powerful Stalinist Communist Party now turned to the avatar of anti-Communism. Largely thanks to Solzhenitsyn, the *nouveaux philosophes*—former Marxist thinkers like André Glucksmann and Bernard-Henri Lévy—took a strong anti-Communist stance and assumed an intellectual authority in France. American thinkers did not change as markedly as those in France had, because fewer of them had lived under any illusions about the nature of the Soviet regime. Orwell, after all, had been published and absorbed, and anti-Stalinist redoubts on the left—including *Common Sense*, Dwight Macdonald's *Politics*, and, most important, *Partisan Review*—had done a great deal to obliterate lingering fantasies about the Soviet Union even among former Communist sympathizers. Still, the American intelligentsia, especially on the left, was not entirely convinced of the accuracy of all that Solzhenitsyn had reported—or, at least, they had not focussed on it sufficiently, concentrating more on the war in Vietnam or on their own dalliances with Castro's Cuba. Susan Sontag, who shocked an audience of left-wing intellectuals and activists at New York's Town Hall in 1982 simply by equating Communism with Fascism and suggesting that the *Reader's Digest* may have been more accurate than *The Nation* in its assessment of Communism, admits that she had been taken aback by Solzhenitsyn and "The Gulag Archipelago."

"It was January of 1976, and I was having a long conversation with Joseph Brodsky," Sontag told me recently. "We were both laughing, and agreeing about how we thought Solzhenitsyn's views on the United States, his criticism of the press, and all the rest were so deeply wrong. And then Joseph said, 'But, you know, Susan, everything Solzhenitsyn says about the Soviet Union is true. Really. All those numbers—sixty million victims—it's all true.' Until then, I must have felt that it was an exaggeration or one-sided, somehow. I don't really know what kind of inner reservations I had. But at that moment something gave way."

Brodsky, for his part, told me, "I was not surprised, really, that Susan had been so shocked. Maybe I found it revolting and idiotic. But I have a theory of why these things don't seep through, and that is a theory about self-preservation, mental self-preservation. Western man, by and large, is the most natural man, a mental bourgeois, and he cherishes his mental comfort. It is almost impossible for him to admit disturbing evidence. Plus, when you add in the phenomenon of geography, which was very real until recently, and add into it the particularity of Soviet reality, even just the difficult names—when you add all that in, you have a considerable barrier, a mental fence that was constructed especially by the Western left. It was mostly among the intellectuals, the educated classes. Sometimes education results only in obfuscation."

The history of willful obfuscation regarding the Soviet Union has a long and painful history among some of the most revered intellectuals of the century. The desire to wish away the catastrophe of the Soviet Union makes for a depressing psychological portrait. George Bernard Shaw, for one, declared, "We cannot afford to give ourselves moral airs when our most enterprising neighbor"—the Soviet Union—"humanely and judiciously liquidates a handful of exploiters and speculators to make the world safe for honest man." Elsewhere Shaw said, "Mussolini, Kemal, Pilsudski, Hitler, and the rest can all depend on me to judge them by their ability to deliver the goods and not by Swinburne's comfortable notions of freedom. Stalin has delivered the goods to an extent that seemed impossible."

While the likes of Shaw's stupidities became less common with time, many intellectuals on the left remained hesitant to denounce the Soviet Union. The reasons were various, but perhaps the most important was the liberal aversion to joining ranks with anti-Communism as a movement. Joseph McCarthy was repellent, and so was the senator who greeted Solzhenitsyn most noisily—Jesse Helms. Often the leading anti-Communists were so harebrained in their rhetoric or so repugnant in their positions on other issues—race and the war in Vietnam being but two—that there was no way the left could find a common language with them. What remains a wonder is how resistant the "anti-anti-Communists" were to the figure of Solzhenitsyn. Oddly, Solzhenitsyn's children, as bridges between their father and the American world they grew up in, understand as well as any scholar the barrier that developed between the writer and his newfound land.

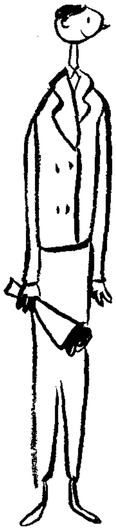
"My father spent his entire life fighting the Communist system, and, understandably, there was no relativity involved: they were evil and that was that," Yermolai told me before he left for Taiwan. "It was a question of a battle to the death that was black and white and requiring courage. Having gone through the Western system—through the Vermont schools and Harvard and all the rest—I guess I've been inculcated with the more relative way of things, leaving a door open for merits on both sides of issues. But you should know that it wasn't like my father was some kind of anti-Western ogre at home. It's true we didn't watch television that much when we were young. Nothing like the national average. But I remember watching the '86 World Series with my mother—the Mets and the Red Sox—and we listened to rock and roll, all the usual things."

Visiting the Solzhenitsyns makes them immediately less alien. It somehow humanizes the father to see Ignat's room, with its hand-drawn emblems of the New York sports teams on the wall, or to hear Stephan mimic the Linda Richman "Saturday Night Live" shtick, to his mother's indulgent incomprehension. Even when it comes to the attacks on Solzhenitsyn, the sons are ironic, American.

"I suppose in the age of political correctness we should all feel emotionally victimized," Ignat said.

At lunch in the kitchen, Solzhenitsyn himself reminded me of a slightly gruff uncle. He sat at the head of the table and took delight in announcing the day's news from Russia, and giving his slightly grumpy commentary. ("Isn't it about time Yeltsin cracked down on crooks?") When he was done, he quietly forked his way through a plate of hamburgers, beet salad, and potatoes, excused himself, and returned to the working house.

Back in the study, I asked Solzhenitsyn about his relations with the West. He knew that things had gone wrong, but had no intention of making any apologies. "Instead of secluding myself here and writing 'The Red Wheel,' I suppose I could have spent time making myself likable to the West," he said. "The only problem is that I would have had to drop my way of life and my work. And, yes, it is true, when I fought the dragon of Communist power I fought it at the highest pitch of expression. The people in the West were not accustomed to this tone of voice. In the West, one must have a balanced, calm, soft voice; one ought to make sure to doubt oneself, to suggest that one may, of course, be completely wrong. But I didn't have the time to busy myself with this. This was not my main goal."



I remarked that I had recently heard a lecture in New York given by Solzhenitsyn's biographer, Michael Scammell, and that at the end all the questions from the audience had boiled down to "Why doesn't Solzhenitsyn like us?"

The notion that he is "anti-Western" is wrong, and "arose out of the inordinate sensitivity and superficiality of Western correspondents," he said. "My speeches to the A.F.L.-C.I.O. in 1975—and I would *not* take back a single word of them—were built in the following way: one speech against the Communist state and the second against Communism as an ideology. Both of them were absolutely correct. I said there, 'Do not help us. Fine. But, at least, don't help dig our graves.' Immediately, the next day, the press was in an uproar, saying that Solzhenitsyn wants to destroy détente and go to war with the Soviet Union. Never in my life did I ever call for liberation by the West. Nor did I ask for the West to fight for our sake, or even help. I said only, 'Just do not help our executioners.' They asked about détente. I said, 'Yes, I am for détente, but only so that all cards are on the table. Otherwise, what really happens under détente is that you are being deceived.' For example, in the speech to the unions, I noted, 'Please understand, you are being deceived. There are still P.O.W.s in Vietnam. They will not be released, because they were tortured.' The whole Washington press corps had a great laugh at my expense. What a stupid thing he has dreamed up! Everything has been counted up and is in order! And now we see today that they say not everyone was returned, but back then they laughed. You see, the whole atrocity of Communism could never be accommodated by the Western journalistic mind. I spoke on the basis of my experiences in the Gulag.

"Most Americans understood what I was saying, even if the press did not. The press did not understand, because it did not want to and because I had criticized them. But how can I not criticize the press? How can the press aspire to true power? No one elected it. How can it aspire to an equal level with the three branches of government? The people in the press can be either scoundrels or good—it's all a matter of chance. The press does very often play a positive role. In Russia today, the press is unravelling what our criminal oligarchy is up to. Even though most of the Russian press depends on the government for financial support, there are still excellent articles. How can one not value the press? But there must *not* be abuses, and in relation to me there have been staggering abuses."

It is a curious thing: Václav Havel is almost universally admired, even loved, in the West; Solzhenitsyn is not. And yet Havel's essays and letters show an admiration of and an affinity with some of Solzhenitsyn's greatest obsessions: the need for a spiritual dimension in politics, the need for the East to see Western capitalism and democracy with a clear eye, without romanticism. I suggested to Solzhenitsyn that part of his problem might be one of his glaring differences with Havel: while Havel revels in Western pop culture, and writes affectionate paeans to the Rolling Stones and Frank Zappa, Solzhenitsyn calls pop culture "manure."

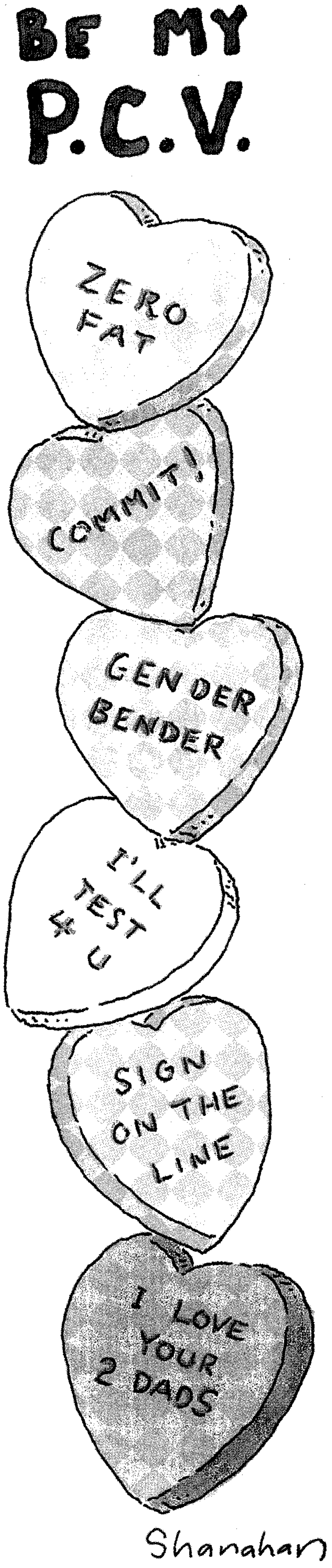
"Well, these things, after all, are the pits of Western culture," he said. "This is not to the credit of the development of Western culture. This is the image I use: that it is manure that flowed under the Iron Curtain, and it influences the unformed, the youth. They have no idea what thinkers or writers there may have been in the West. They just hear rock and roll and wear some sort of T-shirts with something on them. This is dangerous for the younger, unprotected part of the population. Maybe they'll develop badly. They need to be protected. Our youth is in terrible straits."

The charges that have hurt Solzhenitsyn most in the West are those of anti-Semitism and authoritarianism. There exists a lingering suspicion that Solzhenitsyn's critique of secularism in the West and his Russian patriotism are somehow a combustible combination—one that spells trouble for Jews and other non-Russian minorities. The charges are preposterous—nowhere does Solzhenitsyn support a theocracy—and yet they persist. (In the Soviet Union, the Kremlin's original "accusation" was that he was a Jew—"Solzhenitsker"—and a bourgeois counterrevolutionary.) The most comprehensive set of charges was published in the American Jewish magazine *Midstream* in 1977. There a Russian émigré named Mark Perakh blamed Solzhenitsyn for, at best, a thoughtless attitude toward Jews. He noted that in the second volume of "Gulag" the majority of the camp commandants shown in a full-page gallery of photographs were Jewish, and that in "Lenin in Zurich" the evil "genius" supporting Lenin was Parvus, a German Jew. (Solzhenitsyn, for his part, says that the pictures in "Gulag" were the only ones available at the time, and that the historical characters in "Lenin in Zurich," Parvus included, are portrayed accurately and according to reliable records and witnesses.)

"In the magazine *Midstream*, I was charged with anti-Semitism because nowhere in 'One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich' did the word 'Yid' appear," Solzhenitsyn said. "The word doesn't appear, and therefore I am an anti-Semite! The author is sure that in the camps there was no more urgent question than the Jewish question. He thinks they all sat around and condemned Jews all day and said 'Yid.' Well, in this book no one uses the term, so I must be hiding the facts—and why would I do that unless I was an anti-Semite? Meanwhile, in reality, there were informers being knifed, there were uprisings against the authorities, there were murders with machine guns spraying all around. There were no more than five or six Jews in the whole camp. The same thing with the accusation of czarism—that I want to return to the past. There is not a single passage of mine that has been shown me in which I say that I want to return to the past, that I want priests in power, a theocracy.

"Anti-Semitism is a prejudiced and unjust attitude toward the Jewish people as a whole. My own work has no such attitude. The press has said, 'Please make such a statement.' But there exists in this country the presumption of innocence. Why should I suddenly come forward with a statement that I am not an anti-Semite? It would be as if I were to make the statement that I am not a thief, that I have not stolen anything. If I am accused of actually stealing from someone, then I would come forward and deny it. So, if somebody were to show where, specifically, I exhibit an unjust or prejudiced attitude toward the Jewish people, if they would show me one such quotation in my work, I would gladly defend myself. But nobody has ever pointed out such a passage, and yet I am still asked to make the statement that I am not an anti-Semite."

SOLZHENITSYN will make no farewell tour of the country he has lived in for eighteen years, but he did make the rounds of Western Europe last fall. He visited Nikita Struve in Paris, met with Pope John Paul II in Rome, and said his farewells to old friends in Switzerland and Germany. The trip to Europe was mostly personal, but there were two public speeches—one in Liechtenstein, one in France—that conveyed a good sense of Solzhenitsyn's current thinking and of a distinct shift,



if not in his views, then in his emphases and his tone.

At the International Institute for Philosophy, in the village of Schaan, Solzhenitsyn rehearsed many of his old themes for the people of Liechtenstein: the failure of the West to recognize the scale of evil in the Soviet Union, the lack of an ethical dimension in politics since the rise of secularism. But, even if he sounded much like a preacher, there was less fire and brimstone than there had been at Harvard sixteen years ago. Gone was the old, astringent tone, gone were the scathing images and sarcastic phrases. He called for a saner, more limited role for modern technology, a search for a spirituality that would allow men and women to move beyond self-absorption and fear of death. A pleasant, almost New Age modesty had leavened his rhetoric. Small is beautiful. Man is lost without belief.

A few weeks later, in the town of Lucs-sur-Boulogne, Solzhenitsyn spoke to a crowd of thirty thousand gathered to commemorate the massacre of ninety thousand Frenchmen by the revolutionary Jacobin government between 1793 and 1795. It was a remarkable event, probably the most important public appearance that Solzhenitsyn has made since Harvard. On the dais, he attacked violent revolution, all attempts to remake a society at one bloody moment. The uprising of the Vendée and its brutal suppression were, he said, parallel to the Bolsheviks' suppression of peasant uprisings in Tambov and in Western Siberia in the early nineteen-twenties:

> That revolution brings out instincts of primordial barbarism, the sinister forces of envy, greed, and hatred—this even its contemporaries could see all too well. They paid a terrible enough price for the mass psychosis of the day, when merely moderate behavior, or even the perception of such, already appeared to be a crime. But the twentieth century has done especially much to tarnish the romantic lustre of revolution which still prevailed in the eighteenth century. As half-centuries and centuries have passed, people have learned from their own misfortunes that revolutions demolish the organic structures of society, disrupt the natural flow of life, destroy the best elements of the population and give free rein to the worst; that a revolution never brings prosperity to a nation, but benefits only a few shameless opportunists, while to the country as a whole it heralds countless deaths, widespread impoverishment, and, in the gravest cases, a long-lasting degeneration of the people. . . .
>
> I would not wish a "great revolution" upon any nation. Only the arrival of Thermidor prevented the eighteenth-century revolution from destroying France. But the revolution in Russia was not restrained by any Thermidor as it drove our people on the straight path to a bitter end, to the abyss, to the depths of ruin.

Later, when I met with Solzhenitsyn, I asked him why he had been so sweeping in his judgment. Was the American Revolution, too, a catastrophe?

"No," he said. "By 'revolution' I mean a violent overthrow of power within a particular country which claims human lives. Such revolutions have occurred in France, in Russia. The word 'revolution' is being applied to any change today. That is not what I mean by 'revolution.' The American Revolution, to me, was not a revolution. This was a national liberation—like Italy liberating itself from Austria, like the unification of Germany in the nineteenth century. I condemn revolution because it undermines the strength of the nation instead of allowing evolutionary development."

Solzhenitsyn soon heard ringing agreement with this from the Kremlin. On January 10, 1994, the government's new Commission for the Rehabilitation of Victims of Political Repression issued a report condemning Lenin and the Bolsheviks for the suppression of the Kronstadt Rebellion of 1921. The sailors of Kronstadt, who had initially supported the Bolsheviks and a socialist system, staged demonstrations calling for fair elections, a representative parliament, and other reforms repugnant to the new regime. The Bolsheviks declared war on the "counter-revolutionary conspiracy" and crushed the uprising with mass executions, deportations, and jailings. Aleksandr Yakovlev, the chairman of the commission, declared that Kronstadt proved that Bolshevik terror was Lenin's singular contribution to Russia. Stalin "was just the Great Continuer of Lenin's Task," he said. "It all began under Lenin."

In Vermont, Solzhenitsyn has kept his own counsel for years, preferring to work on his literary projects and keep his opinions on Russian politics to himself. In his only major American interview since the rise of Gorbachev, which appeared in *Time* in 1989, he held fast to one ground rule: there could be no questions about politics in the Soviet Union, the better to avoid his showing any signs of undue euphoria or discouragement. In 1990, Solzhenitsyn published his long essay "Rebuilding Russia," which called for an end to the Soviet empire and the evolutionary development of democracy. But even in "Rebuilding Russia" he remained reticent about the dominant Russian personalities of the past seven or eight years. Why, I asked him, did he think the Soviet Union finally collapsed? What role did he think Gorbachev played?

3
WEATHER TEAM
CRAWFORD

"And for all of us here at the six-o'clock news—and don't forget we'll be appearing Saturday night at Mr. Fun—make it a good one!"

"I can say I was the first person to predict that the Soviet Union would collapse, and to declare that this was necessary," he replied. "Not only did Gorbachev not want to hear about this; President Bush and other Western leaders also said the Soviet Union must remain intact. To me, it had been clear for many years. To all of us in prison, it was clear that Communism could not stand on its own. Ironically, Communism, which is based on the theory that the economy is the basis of all human activity, collapsed for economic reasons. Its economy was completely absurd. It could survive only with an iron grip. When Gorbachev first tried to ease that iron grip, the process of collapse accelerated. Gorbachev did not have in mind the negation of socialism. Even when he came back from captivity after the attempted coup in August of 1991, he said once again that our 'choice' was socialism. By no means did he intend to part company with socialism. He wanted only to rearrange things slightly and give the *nomenklatura* economic influence. There were clearly dirty economic transactions going on. Under Gorbachev, the debt more than quadrupled. The country never saw that money.

"Gorbachev imagined he would give glasnost to the Moscow intelligentsia, and, with its help, and with the help of the press, he would tame the extreme conservatives in the Party. But glasnost immediately spread to the whole country and to the nationalities question. The nationalities question sprang up everywhere, and the most extreme chauvinistic points of view developed. He could not cope with that. He could not imagine where all this would lead. In general, Gorbachev and his circle were locked into a Marxist ideology, and they were shortsighted. For example, about Eastern Europe. He could not foresee what would happen there. He wanted to replace their Ligachevs with their own Gorbachevs and leave it at that. But as soon as he touched something all these 'velvet revolutions' happened right away."

Solzhenitsyn gave almost no credit to Gorbachev, maintaining that expedience or necessity or cynicism motivated all he did. But what of Gorbachev's decision to withdraw from the arms race and end the Cold War?

"This was not cynicism," Solzhenitsyn said. "He really understood that the country was in such a difficult economic situation that sustaining the tension of the old rivalry with the West was no longer possible. The Cold War was essentially won by Ronald Reagan when he embarked on the Star Wars program and the Soviet Union understood that it could not take this next step. Ending the Cold War had nothing to do with Gorbachev's generosity; he was compelled to end it. He had no choice but to disarm."

In contrast to his denunciations of Gorbachev, Solzhenitsyn has generally backed Yeltsin, and even issued a statement of support last October when Yeltsin ordered the storming of the rebellious parliament.

"I both support Yeltsin and criticize him," Solzhenitsyn said. "I support him because—well, Gorbachev was not sincere in all his pronouncements, while Yeltsin was. Yeltsin truly decided to cut off ties with the Party. You might have seen on TV in 1990 how he walked out of the Party Congress with everyone sitting down looking at him as if they were wolves. And in August of 1991, when he read his pronouncement from the top of a tank, he acted courageously again. One cannot even compare him with Gorbachev. Yeltsin truly wanted what was best.

"But immediately after August of 1991 Yeltsin committed a series of mistakes, and very serious ones. That September, he could have easily dissolved the Supreme Soviet, dispersed the local soviets, and closed down the Communist Party, and nobody would have dared to object. There was such a surge of enthusiasm then! Everyone wanted this done, but he did not do anything. And so two years later—in October of 1993—he was forced to carry on this horrifying carnage in Moscow. In 1991, he could have done it with clean hands.

"Second, there is his indifference to the twenty-five million Russians now living abroad. He made no statement about this. God forbid we should have some sort of war over this as in Yugoslavia, but Yeltsin should have said, 'We take note that there are twelve million Russians in Ukraine, seven million in Kazakhstan, and in all negotiations we will always remind you of this and will seek a political solution to this question.' But he did not do this. He simply said, 'I accept all the borders,' and let it go at that. It was Lenin who established these false borders—borders that did not correspond to the ethnic borders. They were set up in ways to undermine the central Russian nation—as conscious punishment. The Donetsk and Lugansk regions supported the Cossacks in their fight with the Bolsheviks, and so Lenin cut those regions off from the Don as punishment. Southern Siberia rose up massively against the Bolsheviks, so he gave the region to Kazakhstan.

"As far as Ukraine is concerned, I was perfectly well aware of the mood of Ukrainian nationalists twenty years before Moscow ever heard about it. I spent time with such people in the camps. I know their intransigence. They were raised in Galicia, and they wanted absolutely to be separate. I greatly respect the Ukrainian people; I have great sympathy for them. I myself am part Ukrainian. If you want to be separate, by all means, go ahead, please. But within the borders of the true Ukraine. The historical Ukraine, the place where Ukrainians really live.

"So it has turned out that twenty-five million Russians all of a sudden live outside Russia. This is the biggest diaspora in the world. The leaderships of Ukraine and Kazakhstan are both extremely shortsighted. They have taken upon themselves a task that culturally cannot be worked out. For example, in Kazakhstan they will have to turn those Russians into Kazakhs. So what do they begin to do? They begin to rename villages. They make it a criminal act to speak out against the exclusivity of the Kazakh language. In Ukraine, they are eliminating Russian schools."

In the past two years, I said, the Russian Army has meddled consistently in the "near abroad," the former republics of the Soviet Union, in a clear attempt to reëstablish at least some of the power that Moscow lost with the collapse of the union. Does Russia really have the right to send troops into Tajikistan, Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia the way it has done?

"Interference in Georgia, in Armenia, and Azerbaijan? God forbid!" Sol-

"Adrian says his bisque lacks focus."

zhenitsyn said. "This sphere of influence, this military presence, is a remnant of imperial thinking. It must not be there. Of course, there is also a technical explanation. Why has Russia conducted itself this way? After the breakup of the Soviet Union, Russia found itself with no protected borders. You could do anything you liked, bring in anything across the borders: drugs, radioactive materials, arms, and so on. And so, in panic that the borders could not be quickly fortified, Russia decided to protect the old borders. But we must restructure, adjust. We must stop insisting on the right to take action in the breakaway republics.

"By the way, there is a huge Islamic nucleus on the rise. There was a conference of Islamic nations in Alma-Ata in 1991, and there they proclaimed the creation of a greater Turkish region, from Anatolia to Altai. This is what they have in mind. I would not necessarily say that this is better for the world than a Russian presence in Central Asia. But let events take their course. Let the world deal with this problem. Maybe it is a threat, but it is not our business to interfere."

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Finally, I asked about what are probably the two most pressing problems in Russia today: the collapse of the economy, and the advent, after the December elections, of a powerful opposition force dominated by hard-line nationalists, neo-Fascists, and Communists.

"Yeltsin's economic mistakes are enormous," Solzhenitsyn said. "Yeltsin felt the need to adopt any reform as soon as possible. We had Yegor Gaidar, a theorist who sat in his office under the influence of the International Monetary Fund, which itself exhibited total ignorance of the situation in Russia. Gaidar adopted a free-market policy, thinking that once prices were freed you would solve everything, because competition would begin and then the prices would stabilize and fall. He predicted first that they would stabilize in a month, then in two, then in four. So this is how this reform, which made no sense economically, began. It showed no compassion toward the people. The government never even asked what the people will do. Its own people live well, after all. Gaidar said after a year of the reforms, 'Yes, we had thought there might be a popular uprising, but it did not occur.' Yeltsin went even further, saying 'I congratulate the people for not rebelling.' It's as if I were to meet you on the street, rob you, strip you, and congratulate you for not offering resistance.

"This is why the people, desperate and not knowing how to express themselves, expressed themselves the way they did in the December elections. They said, in effect, 'Anyone but you!' Those who voted wished primarily to voice their protest against this reform, against this conduct of our government. Their only recourse was to vote for those who showed their sharp disagreement with the reform. And that was who? The Communists, the agrarians, the women's party, and Vladimir Zhirinovsky. No one even knows who is in these parties. It is only because Zhirinovsky spoke so sharply against the current policy that he received so many votes. It was not a choice *for* Fascism, and it is not a choice *for* Communism. I receive letters saying, 'We feel thrown out into the cold. No one needs us. We cannot in any way influence what is happening.' This is not democracy. We have an oligarchical merger of Communist *nomenklatura* and the shadow economy. Our people have no influence.

"You know, I've never seen Zhirinovsky on television. They say that he has great eloquence and had tremendous impact on his listeners. I don't know if this is true. But, judging by his actions, he is a clown. I can't take him seriously."

Hitler was also a clown at first, I said.

"In terms of being a clown, Zhirinovsky outpaces even Hitler," Solzhenitsyn said. "I've never encountered this level of unending lunacy. It is a joke at every step of the way. Now, more important, people speak about the danger of Fascism in Russia. For me, the word 'Fascism' is used instead of 'National Socialism.' National Socialism is based on racism—without racism National Socialism is inconceivable. That is its basis and its theory. Racism, as a state policy, is possible only in a very homogeneous country, such as Germany, not in a multinational country like Russia. The danger is not Fascism, as many say it is, but is, rather, that it is possible to come to power merely on slogans refuting current policy.”

During our conversation, Natalia Dmitriyevna joined us. I remarked that when I was in Moscow a couple of months earlier I had been disturbed to hear about how the city police had carried out wholesale arrests against Armenians, Azerbaijanis, and Chechen under the pretext that they alone were responsible for the soaring crime rate. I was even more disturbed to read polls in *Izvestiya* showing that the overwhelming majority of Muscovites were all for the arrests.

Somehow, the Solzhenitsyns did not see the issue as a matter of civil liberties.

“You know, this question is first of all a criminal question,” Solzhenitsyn said. “The Caucasians created a real Mafia, and in the Moscow and St. Petersburg regions they have monopolized the arms and restaurant trades.”

“I saw this with my own eyes,” said Natalia, who had been back to Russia twice since the ban on the family was lifted. “It is monstrous. There is nothing national about it. It's a criminal situation in Moscow when every father fears for his daughter walking at night. Those people are all armed to the teeth. They occupy every market. I saw myself how the old Russian women from the Moscow suburbs who try to sell some radishes or green onions have to work outside the subway stations, because they have been driven from the markets. Every market stall has to be bought for a huge sum, and, of course, none of the women could afford that. Those people have completely taken over life in Moscow, and I'll be the first to applaud if they are driven out—not because they are Chechen but because they are bandits. They have behaved like an occupying army that conquered the country.”

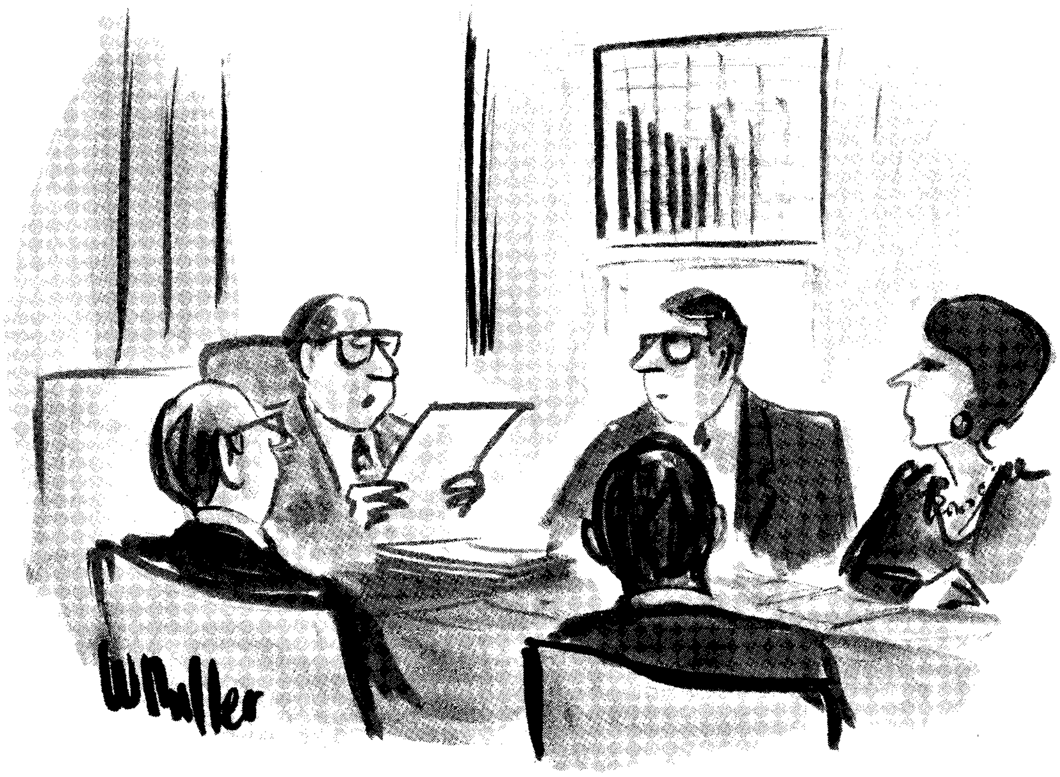
In “The First Circle” Solzhenitsyn made the famous remark that in a tyranny a real writer is like a second government. Whether it was Pushkin, Tolstoy, or Herzen under the czars, or Akhmatova, Pasternak, or Mandelstam under the Bolsheviks, the role of the writer in Russia has been singular. But if all goes well in Russia, that kind of authority will, happily, vanish.

“When I said that a writer is like a second government, I meant it in the context of a fully totalitarian regime,” Solzhenitsyn told me. “And, indeed, one can see today, in the newly published documents of the Politburo, that the members were concerned with my personal fate as seriously as if I were a whole state. In this sense, there was no exaggeration. But in a free society this formula no longer applies. Moreover, literature, like so much else in Russia, is now in a state of terrible degradation. At the moment, literature means very little. And yet I still hope that my books may help serve moral goals. I still hope to be useful in some way. I cannot write simply to be able to say, ‘Look how cleverly I have fashioned this.’ I refuse to see literature as amusement, as a game. I think that you ought not to approach literature without a moral responsibility for every word you write.”

Solzhenitsyn's approach to literature, as a reader and as a writer, is as antimodernist as some of his political positions are. In our talks, he was disdainful of some of the contemporary writers in Russia, who tend to look for inspiration to, say, the sexual narratives of the Marquis de Sade or the formal hijinks of Italo Calvino rather than to Russian realism. He cannot abide experimentalism for its own sake, or pure pleasure as a literary end. To Solzhenitsyn, even Vladimir Nabokov was ultimately a disappointment.

“I don't take anything away from his artistic force,” he said. “I nominated Nabokov for the Nobel Prize, but he did not receive it. At the same time, I am grieved that Nabokov, who came from a family that participated so avidly in the affairs of Russia, and who could have written so much and compiled even more material on the Russian Revolution a long time before me—well, I am grieved that he washed his hands of it and busied himself only with literary successes. I am pained by this. I do not understand it. I do not understand how this is possible.

“As it happens, I do not like ‘Lolita’ at all. It seems to me in bad taste. But he has some fine novels—‘Invitation to



“The figures for the last quarter are in. We made significant gains in the fifteen-to-twenty-six-year-old age group, but we lost our immortal souls.”

a Beheading' and many others. I rate him very highly. But I don't like 'Lolita,' because in my opinion it is an unworthy play on sexuality."

Over the years, a loose critical orthodoxy has evolved about Solzhenitsyn's collected works. "One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich" is the undisputed masterpiece. "The First Circle" and, to a lesser extent, "Cancer Ward" are important works not only of political comment but also of realism; it's as if, in the land of Socialist Realism, Solzhenitsyn took a debased form and gave it life. "Gulag," too, is generally considered a masterwork, but of what is less clear. Memoir? Political analysis? Documentary prose? No matter. The three volumes of "Gulag," like "One Day," will endure.

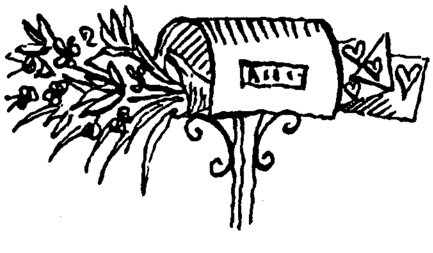
Solzhenitsyn sees his own work differently from nearly everyone else in the world. In 1937, when he was still a convinced Communist, he dreamed of writing an epic history leading up to the October Revolution of 1917, and he even began making notes and writing early sequences. "The Red Wheel" has been the obsession of Solzhenitsyn's writing life. As his politics changed—especially in prison, where his labored defenses of Marxism, he has said, "shattered like glass"—so changed "The Red Wheel." Eventually, he came to believe that the October Revolution, celebrated in Bolshevik mythology as a popular revolt, was actually a coup d'état carried out in circumstances of complete chaos. More important, he felt, were the historical events beginning with the First World War and climaxing in the February Revolution—the overthrow in early 1917 of the czar and his short-lived replacement with the Provisional Government.

"When I began to study the February Revolution, I understood, first of all, that it is the central event of modern Russian history," Solzhenitsyn said. "I came to understand its weaknesses, its flaws, and how it was already doomed to result in October. Doomed. I understood this because by April of 1917 Lenin was already laughing at it. Everything lay at his feet. So, gradually, my emphasis shifted in time to February. Then I realized that to explain the February Revolution I had to explain how czarism and society had developed by that time. And so I went back all the way to the end of the nineteenth century, even though I was rebuked in the West for admiring the czar and for calling for a return to the past. The émigrés, meanwhile, chided me for writing an insulting book about the last czar, Nicholas II. But the truth is that I describe him as he was. I do not praise him or rebuke him. I simply portray him as he was."

"The Red Wheel" is formally quite different from anything Solzhenitsyn has written before. Alternating with the historical narrative are long biographical set pieces, actual newspaper clippings, and other experiments, which borrow from sources as varied as John Dos Passos and Tolstoy. But most striking to Russian readers, perhaps, is Solzhenitsyn's language—his use of Russian words that have fallen into disuse. For many years, Solzhenitsyn has made it his business to compile such words, even assembling a dictionary with thirty thousand entries. Although Solzhenitsyn has been using such language ever since "One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich," it is this unusual lexicon, more than the formal experiments, or even the sheer immensity, that seems to trouble the Russian writers who have read all or part of "The Red Wheel."

"The language is not at all appropriate," Vasily Aksyonov told me. "It's very strange to be reading a conversation between Imperial Guards and find them talking like two peasants. In 'The Red Wheel' Solzhenitsyn is at his best only when he is writing about something that he knows absolutely, that he is close to. The sections on Lenin are great. But there is so much that is uneven. His descriptions, for example, of Russian village life are false, and his writing about old Petersburg society is also not a success. It's too far from him."

Joseph Brodsky was even more critical. "What Solzhenitsyn has done over all is tremendous, but I am not a complete champion," he said. "I can't approve of his stylistic endeavors. He is a writer with natural gifts and talent. But I think he suffers from this desire, widespread in the twentieth century, that a Russian writer should have his own distinctive style. Solzhenitsyn had reason to doubt that he was in possession of such a commodity, despite the grace of 'One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich.' In a sense, he went shopping for a style, and he wound up with two things. First, he wanted to tap the dictionary. He forged or coined words that have Slavonic roots but are not really Russian. There is Russian grammar and, to a certain extent, vocabulary there, but it's Slavic, not Russian. More important, in 'The Red Wheel' he decided to enliven things because of the extraordinary threat of monotony. And so he is relying on the sort of filmlike technique in Dos Passos, with headlines and documentary material spliced in. Sometimes it seems there is more scissors and paste than actual scribbling, if you know what I mean. It looks grotesque to my eye. It reflects a groping for a style. It's as if he saw Proust with his style of elaboration, Beckett's dead-end style, Andrei Platonov's cul-de-sac syntax, and he knew he needed something to call his own."



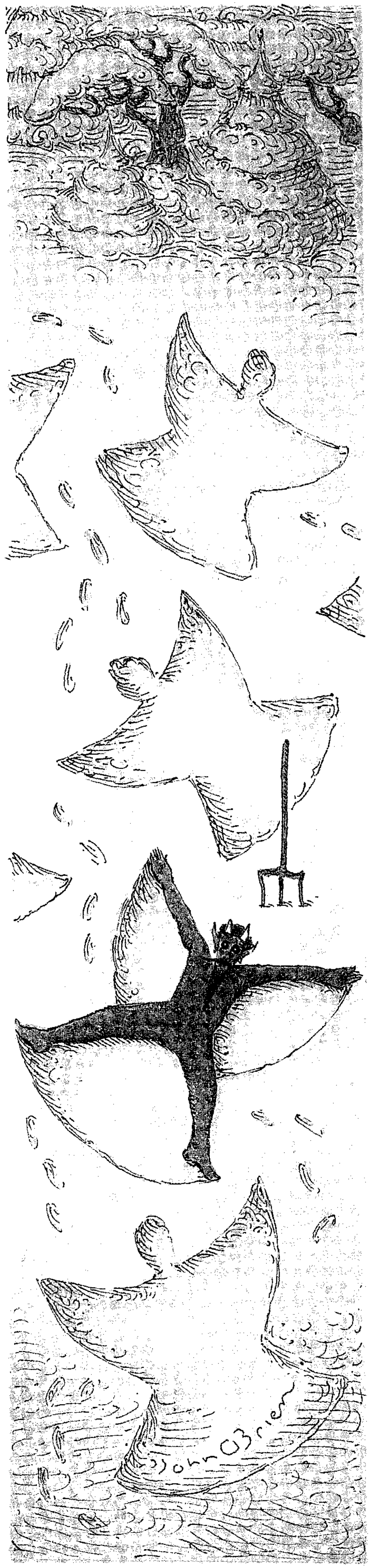
When I summarized such criticism for Solzhenitsyn, he seemed more interested than dismissive. "My language is this," he said. "There is a river flowing along, and you can take water from the surface or you can reach in deeper and take from a lower stream. I take from the lower streams of the river of our language. In Russia, because of the general decline of Russian culture, there is a general decline in the language. If you now say to a Russian words like 'briefing,' 'establishment,' 'consensus,' everyone will understand. But as for Russian words, they will ask, 'What is this?' They are losing the Russian language. It is because our people are now losing the richness of their language and snapping up Anglicisms that my language seems somehow strange. Of course, it would be a lot easier to write more simply, but I don't need to do that. I am trying to rescue the old richness of the language. There is a layer just below the day-to-day language which is dying off for lack of common use. That's the layer I am trying to rescue. On this point, Brodsky is not correct. I don't try to reach for incomprehensible words or Old Slavonic, and I don't make up any words. I take from what exists. When I compiled and published this dictionary, I gave there examples of use by twenty or twenty-five Russian authors. This is the responsibility of the writer. Without this, the writer is pale and flat, and then he has nothing."

"The Red Wheel," which Solzhenitsyn finished in 1991, consists of "August 1914," "November 1916," "March 1917," and "April 1917." Because public interest in Solzhenitsyn was still high when Farrar, Straus & Giroux published an early version of "August 1914," in 1972, it sold well. "We were right behind 'Jonathan Livingston Seagull' on the *Times* best-seller list," Roger Straus, the publisher, told me. "We sold hundreds of thousands of books." But, Straus said, when he publishes "November 1916," in 1995 or 1996, he expects to print somewhere between twenty-five thousand and fifty thousand copies. "The truth is that I'd consider myself lucky to sell that many," he said. "The interest is just not there anymore." Solzhenitsyn's French publisher, Claude Durand, of Fayard, said much the same thing: "The young just do not know who Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn is." In Russia itself, the publishing industry, like the rest of the economy, is in a state of free fall, and "The Red Wheel" languishes, unpublished. Solzhenitsyn is resigned to the likelihood that the books he considers the centerpiece of his work will not be read properly and completely until the next century. In the meantime, many of the Russians and non-Russians who have read parts of the books have expressed disappointment, even boredom. "The everyday response is based on a kind of tiredness," said Alexis Klimoff, a professor at Vassar, who has translated several of Solzhenitsyn's works. "One of the problems of reading 'The Red Wheel' is: Who has the time? You practically need a grant to read it all. It's thousands and thousands of pages, which, if you wish to make a serious judgment, need to be read together. It's physically exhausting, and people are unlikely to have the opportunity to do that. Reading it becomes a matter of 'Oh, hell, life is too short.' Which is true enough. But it is irresponsible in some fundamental sense."

The critics who have read "The Red Wheel" sympathetically measure it against "War and Peace," often finding that Solzhenitsyn is better at war, Tolstoy at peace. The two works differ, too, in that Solzhenitsyn wants his work to stand as reliable history, a definitive account of Russia's chaotic march toward the rise of Bolshevism.

"The fact is that Tolstoy's work on 'War and Peace' was not very similar to mine on 'The Red Wheel,' " Solzhenitsyn told me. "I won't compare the two works themselves but, rather, their respective aims. Leo Tolstoy wrote in the eighteen-sixties about the events of 1812—approximately fifty years after the fact. But in that time Russian society itself had hardly changed. There was an aristocratic Russia that still existed; everyday life was much the same. Therefore, his task was easier in the sense that he was describing the same world at an earlier stage. He could have easily transported the people of his world into his novel, because it was much the same circle. I started in 1937 but really began writing seriously in 1969, and from 1969 to 1917 is about the same time difference, but I wrote, I can say, about an entirely different world, a new planet. Pre-revolutionary Russia and then the Russia in which I have lived were cut off from each other. They were different worlds. I had to transport myself into a country that no longer existed. So I did not have the chance to transport today's people into the books."

NOT long ago, I drove to the village of Troitse-Lykovo, on the western outskirts of Moscow. The main road out is the Rublyov Highway, a kind of golden pathway for the Kremlin élite, past and present, who have their dachas west of the city. On Friday afternoons, black Chaika limousines roar along the highway, often seizing the empty middle lane—known as the Kremlin lane—the better to start the weekend a few minutes early. Aleksandr and Natalia Solzhenitsyn are building a house in "dachaland"—on a ten-acre site that, as it happens, is where the fabled military strategist Marshal Mikhail Tukhachevsky once lived. The Solzhenitsyns razed the old wooden house and are now building a V-shaped brick house. There will be a working



wing, with room for archives, a library, and research assistants, and there will be a living wing, with six bedrooms and various living areas. A high wooden fence painted grass green surrounds the property. If the house is not ready for the Solzhenitsyns' arrival, in May—and, considering the pace of construction work in Russia these days, this is a near certainty—they can live in a five-room apartment they own in downtown Moscow.

While I was living in Moscow, from the beginning of 1988 to the end of 1991, most intellectuals had begun to realize that it was inevitable that Solzhenitsyn would be published and would return home. The cultural figures on the right wing—the editors of journals such as *Nash Sovremennik* (*Our Contemporary*)—were hopeful, figuring that Solzhenitsyn would present a hard-line nationalist alternative to Andrei Sakharov and the more Western-oriented radicals. Many of the liberals were terrified. Vitaly Korotich, who was the editor of the reformist magazine *Ogonyok* (*Small Flame*), told me then that it was entirely possible that Solzhenitsyn would return to Moscow as an Ayatollah Khomeini. The publication of "Rebuilding Russia," in 1990, brought an enormous letdown for the right and a relief for the reformers: the essay was anti-empire and pro-democracy. Russian and non-Russian reformers said that the piece showed traces of Solzhenitsyn's distance, his difficulty in grasping events he could only see on television or read about in the press, but, all in all, there was relief.

These days, opinions in Russia about Solzhenitsyn are emotional and mixed. A political poll taken in St. Petersburg last November showed that forty-eight per cent of the respondents would like to see Solzhenitsyn as President of Russia, despite his stated refusal ever to hold office. Only seventeen per cent picked Boris Yeltsin. But in more rarefied circles—among intellectuals, especially—a more ironical attitude toward Solzhenitsyn has formed. I found the attitude ranging from indifference to mockery:

"Solzhenitsyn is late. Developments have accelerated way ahead of him. He must realize he is coming back to a world that is utterly foreign to him."

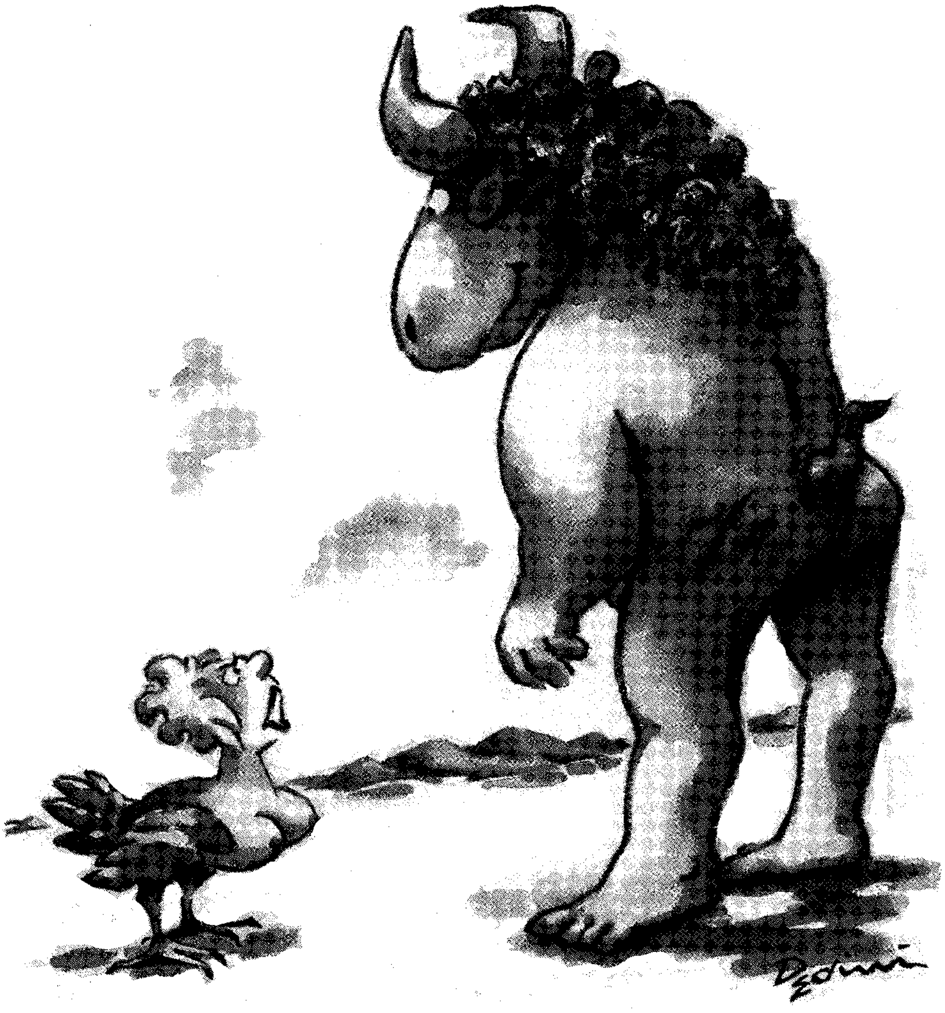
"He should have come back when the Communists were driven out. Where was he? He has nothing to say anymore. This 'Red Wheel' of his is the work of a graphomaniac. I tried to read it and fell asleep every time."

"Maybe if he'd come after Sakharov died, in December of 1989. The reaction to Sakharov's death, the outpouring, was an indication of how much one honest man meant in those days. But the time for a single heroic figure has passed. Solzhenitsyn's authority is based only in the past."

"I suppose he'll come back and play the role of Tolstoy, the great writer who gives us all advice, the prophet who accepts visitors and wears a great beard. The beard is very important in this role."

Solzhenitsyn, for his part, is well aware of the range of attitudes which awaits him. Not only has his wife been back—three times now—but his sons have also been to Russia. Moreover, hundreds of Russians have sent letters to Cavendish telling Solzhenitsyn what they have heard said and what they themselves feel about his return home.

"Many await my arrival with hostility," Solzhenitsyn told me. "There are those who weep for Communism and consider me its main destroyer, the main person at fault. Some fanatics are literally saying they want my neck. Second, the Mafia understand that if I was not going to make peace with the K.G.B., I certainly would not with them. Third, there are those who believe in myths: for example, that I will return and become the head of Pamyat"—the nationalist hate group—"or the head of the right wing. They cannot understand that I want nothing to do with power or any political position. Finally, there are the powers that be. I do not avoid making critical comments. In Europe, or with you here today, I do not avoid criticizing today's authorities or the current re-



"You just don't get it, do you?"

forms and how they are being conducted. I speak out sharply and will continue doing that. I will not be surprised if I am denied access to television after a while. In other words, life will not be easy in any respect. But I am going because I have fulfilled my literary duty and now I must try to fulfill my duty to society to whatever extent I can. How it will turn out I don't know."

In our time together, Solzhenitsyn repeated several times that he had no interest in politics, that he would never run for political office or accept an appointment of any kind. I asked him if he would play the sort of role that Sakharov did in the late nineteen-eighties—that of a moral compass for a country that is adrift.

"My role can be only moral," he said. "What other role can I have? But the situation is changing very quickly. Many years have passed since Sakharov's death. In fact, there is no guarantee that Sakharov would have remained as influential and as much admired as he was. The situation is changing so quickly that it is difficult to say how much my moral efforts will resonate and be successful. The fact that my books have not been read—this also interferes a lot. You can't get them. People say, 'Who's Solzhenitsyn? Oh, yes, he's the guy they kicked out, he did something long ago.' But there are no books. This makes it very difficult."

ONE of the most remarkable aspects of Solzhenitsyn's journey is that he can finish it. In May, the moment his plane lands at Sheremetevo Airport, where the K.G.B. escorted him to the waiting jet twenty years ago, his life will be complete. As a writer, too, he has finished all he has wanted to, restoring the memory of the Soviet holocaust, giving voice to the lost. Now his literary old age does seem Tolstoyan: Tolstoy, in his last years, his great novels done, worked on much shorter fiction, honing valedictory stories like "Hadji Murad" and "Alyosha the Pot" to perfection with ten, fifteen, twenty drafts.

"There is no sense in beginning a big project at my age," Solzhenitsyn said. "But I am very much interested in the short form, and I am beginning to work in it again. It's not just a question of age. I began with short stories, but the task ahead was always first my novels, then 'Gulag,' and then 'The Red Wheel,' and I had to fulfill those tasks. Finally, I have the chance. Now I will replenish my impressions of life in Russia, of today's Russia, and I will definitely write short stories. For the moment, while I am still in Vermont, I am working on stories using materials from the twenties and thirties, because I cannot write about today's Russia without personal impressions of it. I remember well these things from my youth. And then, now that I have finished 'The Red Wheel'—this huge beast now felled—there are many loose ends left over, and it is unclear what to do with them. I have a mountain of leftover material that has to be sorted out."

The Solzhenitsyn house in Cavendish was strewn with packing crates. There were brand-new suitcases heaped in the guest room. The Solzhenitsyns are not selling the Cavendish house, preferring to keep it, at least for now, as a base for their children. Although Yermolai will probably spend the next couple of years working in China, Stephan is still at Harvard, and Ignat is still at the Curtis Institute. They all say they intend to move to Russia, to be of use to Russia, but probably not anytime soon. The center of the household, though, has almost put America behind him.

"It's as if we no longer lived here," Solzhenitsyn said. "In spirit, we have already gone. I await different trials and different tasks. I am ready for this, and I thank God I have the strength for it now. Naturally, I have been following intensively what has been going on in Russia, and I am well informed. But meeting with specific people and learning about their specific fates—that still awaits me. The specific situations in particular cities, in farms and factories—that awaits me. I will need, first of all, a period of reacquaintance, to get a sense of the lower depths of life in Russia. I have to take careful note of it, the way an artist would—of today's situation and the people's mood."

Was he returning with any optimism at all?

"If it took Russia seventy-five years to fall so far, then it is obvious that it will take it more than seventy-five years to rise back up," he said. "A hundred or a hundred and fifty, we can guess. It is very difficult to find a country in modern history that was systematically destroyed for as long as seventy-five years. And it is important to remember that the destroyers destroyed selectively: not just anyone but those who were the most intelligent, those who might protest, those who could think on their own—the life force of the people."

"But, of course, it will be a happy day, returning," Natalia said. "Even now, it is as if a terrible weight had been lifted from us. Just the knowledge that we will finish our lives in Russia is a great relief. When I was back, I got pleasure just from being surrounded by the Russian language. I remember being in the Metro and hearing that banal voice: 'Careful! The doors are closing. . . . The next stop is . . .' But it was in Russian! Just to pass stores that say '*Moloko*' and '*Khleb*' instead of 'Milk' and 'Bread.' The pleasure in that!"

It was time for me to go. Natalia had fed us all one last time. Ignat played a Schubert sonata. Natalia loaded me up with files, clippings, and a Christmas cake to take home to my family. We all agreed to meet again, in Moscow. As a final question, I mentioned to Solzhenitsyn that I remembered his speech in Liechtenstein, when he said that modern man, by putting himself at the center of the world, fears death because death thus becomes the end of all things—and I asked him if he feared dying now that he was seventy-five.

"Absolutely not," he said, his face lighting up with pleasure. "It will just be a peaceful transition. As a Christian, I believe that there is a life after death, and so I understand that this is not the end of life. The soul has a continuation, the soul lives on. Death is only a stage, some would even say a liberation. In any case, I have no fear of death."

"And where will you be buried?"

"I've made a preliminary choice," Solzhenitsyn said. "Maybe I'll change it later, but I have one in mind. It's in central Russia, and I invite you to come there after I have gone." ♦

FAMILY ALBUM
BY RICHARD MERKIN

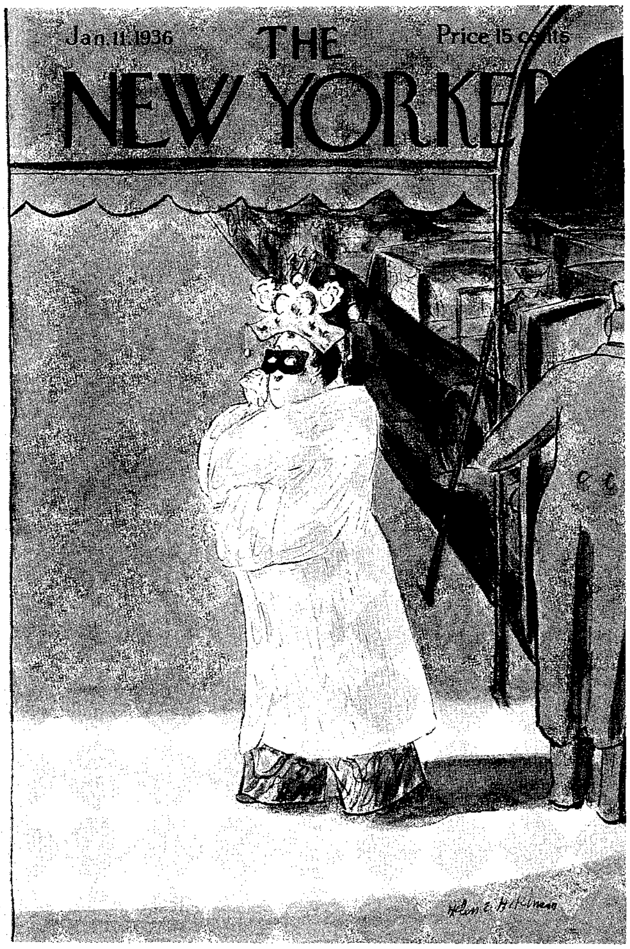
HELEN HOKINSON

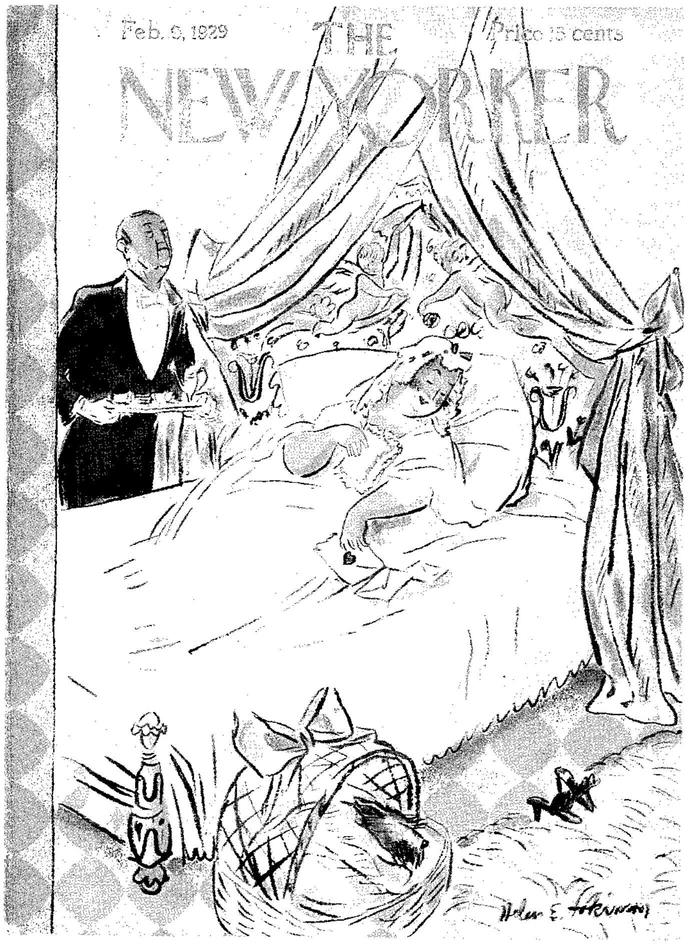
"BEGIN with an individual," the old F. Scott Fitzgerald wall sampler goes, "and before you know it you find that you have created a type; begin with a type, and you find that you have created—nothing." Helen E. Hokinson, still a beloved aunt among the family of *New Yorker* artists, began with the individuals she knew from her genteel New York and Connecticut environs and, in so doing, created a type that will forever bear her name—the Hokinson Woman. Her dowagers and clubwomen were generally edging up on their fifties, were overweight (but intent on doing something about it), and were addicted to chapeaus that somehow always looked both chic and wrong. They were women of cheerful mien, earnest in their cultural and horticultural pursuits, and inclined toward the ingenuous. It was easy to laugh at them, but something about them—perhaps their energy, perhaps their tiny feet—made you laugh gently and with affection. Their prime habitat was Westchester and Fairfield Counties and Manhattan, but one was also to be seen now and then astride a camel on the outskirts of Giza, or furtively edging down a Pigalle alleyway in search of a copy of the banned "Ulysses." They could be doubting, embarrassed, foolish, and briefly melancholy, these Hokinson Women, but they were always indomitable.

Helen Hokinson was born in Mendota, Illinois, in 1893, and studied at the Academy of Fine Arts in Chicago and at the Parsons School of Design. Shortly after *The New Yorker* opened up, in 1925, she sent in a drawing. It was immediately accepted—as was much of the work she submitted to the magazine thereafter. At first, her drawings came without captions, but fate soon provided her with a collaborator, the writer James Reid Parker, who became the ear to her eye. It was a splice made in heaven, and all the more interesting because Hokinson, to judge from her drawings, was a little uncertain about men's ways and looks. What she did understand was that she and the magazine were meant for each other. Unlike some of her intrepid globe-trotters, Hokinson was something of a stay-at-home, preferring the rewards and routines of her work and of an apartment near Gramercy Park and a cottage in Connecticut. It was a dismal irony when, in November, 1949, en route to a speaking engagement in Washington, D.C., she died in a plane crash.

The Hokinson Woman is with us still, happily recognizable and rewarding after all this time. An admirer's note, sent to the artist years ago, could have come in yesterday's mail: "More power to you and the girls. The more I grow to look like them, the more I love them." ◆

RICHARD MERKIN





FICTION

BAD BOY WALKING

BY EMILY CARTER

SHAMBLE-SHANKED, and sparrow-hopping on the balls of his feet, Johnny McDonnell assembled himself in his counsellor's office. It made no difference to him that the counsellor was male, and apparently unimpressed with his progress. Although Johnny liked dealing with women behind desks better than with men behind desks, his sense of righteousness was today unassailable. He had done nothing to be ashamed of, hadn't kissed, hadn't touched, hadn't made a move. With a martyred exhalation of breath through tobacco-stained teeth, he let himself fall into the seat, and began reflexively smoothing back his thinning red hair.

"You know the policy on exclusive relationships, Johnny. I don't need to tell you the policy again, am I right?" Howie said. A short man with a mustache and a gimlet-eyed glare, drumming his pencil on the desk, Howie used to play bass, still listened to his old band on cassettes in his office. Glory days.

Johnny's feet chimed in with the drumming, tapping the carpeted floor with his soft Goodwill-store running shoes.

"Yeah, but this isn't like that, this isn't anything sexual—this is a friendship. We help each other's programs."

"Do you know how many times I've heard that in my short tenure here? Fifty-six. Fifty-six times. This is the fifty-seventh. Let me ask you something: How important is staying sober to you?"

"It's the only thing that's important at all to me."

"Yet if we ask you to do this one thing, you dig your heels in. Why is that, Johnny, why would that be?"

"You're going to say I'm not letting go of my self-willfulness or whatever."

"Yes. That's what I'm going to say. I'm going to ask you again if you're willing to do whatever it takes."

"Yeah, because if I don't—"

"I don't need to point out that you were willing to do whatever it took to get high for the past twenty years?"

Even though he was sitting across the office from Howie, Johnny was starting to feel as if there were less and less room between them. As if, contrary to fact, Howie were coming right over to him and jabbing a finger in his chest. Johnny squirmed backward in his chair, perhaps trying to move it back through the wall.

"You'd like to hit me now, wouldn't you?" Howie smiled. "It would relieve some of that tension in your shoulders, but there would, of course, be consequences. Here's what I'm asking you: Can you learn to do things differently? Can you start with your reflexes?"

"I'm trying."

"Good. Can you make a commitment not to talk alone with Merry for the rest of your stay here?"

"Yeah, I guess I could. I guess I could do that."

"Ask your Higher Power for help."

A POWER greater than yourself. Johnny knew it well, that old concept, jolly and amorphous, that they tossed at you when you were so desperate you'd leap at any flimsy scrap, like a starving dog falling on a pork chop. You might not believe in a God, but if you don't believe there's a Power greater than yourself, went the old joke, just stick your finger in the light socket.

What amazed Johnny, what kept him in a state of consistent and perpetual bewilderment, was his own inability to learn from his mistakes, which, if he looked at his life objectively, were the only things he had available to learn from. He'd spent so much time walking down halls and into offices of one sort or another that by now he should have learned how to navigate them a little more smoothly. The conversation with Howie was essentially a variation of the same chat he'd had with Chuck, the counsellor when he was nine years old: Can you look me in the eye and tell me if we let you go home this weekend you won't split to Lake Welles? He had looked Chuck right in the eye and sworn, and that weekend at the Lake people never noticed the adorable little redhead Dennis the Menace who was going through their beach bags and removing their wallets. Until he'd got "grandiose," as they say in the pamphlets, and bought all his friends a conspicuous amount of corn dogs and purple Slurpees.

Typical of himself, Johnny knew. Because if he'd been able to wait he wouldn't have been caught, but he had a hard time waiting. In fact, he had to admit, he'd never been able to wait more than two minutes for anything at all.

THE halfway house where Johnny was trying to walk the walk was located on a cul-de-sac off West Seventh Street in St. Paul, an old Victorian mansion, with turrets and porticoes, dark-red and crouched on the gray landscape. It had belonged to the manager of the brewery that still sat near the corner of Stewart and West Seventh. Up the hill on Summit Avenue, a broad and shining boulevard, stood the F. Scott Fitzgerald house: a respectable brownstone, obsequiously tucked among the grander patrician domiciles of long-dead robber barons. From the top of the hill, a person could look down at West Seventh Street, but from the halfway house, nobody could see up.

Every morning the clients walked up the road and on to the main thoroughfare to wait for the bus that would take them to their get-well jobs. Discharged into the gray morning light, they came trudging, crossing the railroad tracks in various states of too-much-in-a-hurry. It was a group that might be called eclectic, samples of humanity from across the cultural spectrum: a Mexican-American housewife with five children and a contractor husband in Dallas, addicted to Valium; a brunette stockbroker from Chicago who kept telling people she was there to save her marriage; a Teamster official from Weehawken suffering from the early stages of wet brain; a philosophy major from the Upper West Side of Manhattan whose parents were both rabbis; a California windsurfer who still had anxiety attacks from protracted Xanax withdrawal; and Johnny McDonnell, court-ordered, system-directed, and on probation, probably for the rest of his natural life. This morning, there had been an emergency house meeting—something to do with someone's having a little honesty problem and selling off leftover desserts from the commissary—so the clients trudging up the road were going to be late for work by five or six minutes if they missed the next bus.

As the clients turned the corner, they all became aware of a loud, clattering rumble. The SOO Line train was passing, slowed way down, sixty boxcars long and blocking their way to the other side. The stockbroker looked at her watch and made a series of small exhalations out of her nose. The windsurfer began to shake, and the philosophy major cursed as if he'd just been cut off by one of those notorious New York taxicabs. Johnny, who had not been late one day in the two and a half months he'd been working at Pastry &, in the Westerberg Arcade, jumped up on the hitch between the boxcars and hopped out on the other side, just a few feet along from where he'd started.

"It's only going two miles an hour!" he yelled back, cupping his hand around his mouth. As he stood there, bouncing his feet on the frozen ground, the other clients began to appear one by one, having taken his lead and jumped the hitch. The stockbroker, smoothing the oversized down coat she constantly complained about having to wear because her husband wouldn't send her good one, was the only one who didn't attempt it. The other clients walked ahead of him, but Johnny rooted himself to the spot until the train finished passing and the stockbroker's face appeared. Quizzical and pointy-nosed, she crossed the tracks.

"Personally, I don't care that much if I'm late to this particular job," she said, and walked ahead of him with her teeth chattering.

Johnny trotted to catch up with her. "You're not going to be late, Ma'am, don't worry—the bus comes every seven minutes."

"Well, what the hell am I even doing? It's just an outlet store. God."

There was something about the stockbroker that seemed final and sad to Johnny, something that demanded of him that he make a difference in her morning. Under other circumstances he would have been more attuned to the demand that he steal her earrings and trade them for an eight ball of cocaine, but today, walking beside her, he only wanted to stop her teeth from chattering. "It's a hard row to hoe, but you look good doing it. Sound like a typewriter, though, with your teeth."

As they approached the bus stop, the stockbroker stopped and turned to look at him. Her face peered out of her hood as if framed by a synthetic-fur dandelion, and she laughed.

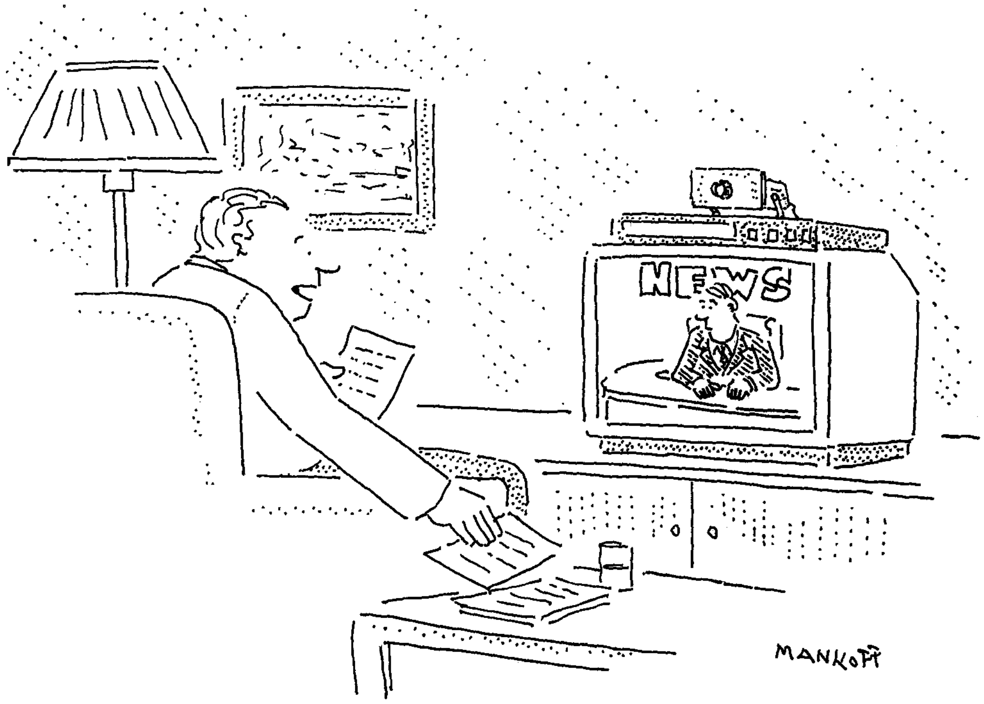
JOHNNY was cleaning out the ice-cream containers behind the counter at Pastry & when Merry came in on her lunch break. She sat at a table near enough for him to see her, a sad little smile on her face. She looked like Tonya Harding but even prettier, he thought. Her hair was blond, cut to curl, and she wore her bangs moussed up in a little tuft. He decided he had better clean off the tabletops, since the lunch rush was over. Spray and wipe, spray and wipe, he made his way in circles around the shop until he was standing next to Merry. Without looking at her, while continuing to wipe the blue Formica tabletop, he asked if she'd heard from her husband.

"I heard from his sister. She said he'd called from somewhere in Akron. She spoke to the kids, though, and they were O.K."

Merry had large, round, violet-blue eyes, eyes filling at this very moment with tears, which only made them look larger, rounder, and more violet-blue than usual. Johnny found himself sitting next to her, twirling a finger in the tuft of her bangs, saying, "I wouldn't worry. With this much shit, there's got to be a horse somewhere around."

She took his hand and put it on her knee underneath the table, where no one could see it. Around them swirled a million events and details in a malevolent whirlpool, so they held on. The ban on talking alone with Merry, Johnny decided, applied only when they were in the house, not out in public.

IN the coffee room where the clients gathered after dinner, before the in-house meeting they were obliged to attend each evening, the air was frosted with cigarette smoke and dense with banter. Clients shuttled in and out, filling plastic mugs with the stale, weak coffee from the percolators, sucking in quick drags of nicotine, calling out to



"The much ballyhooed era of TV interactivity took a step closer to reality today."

one another. People sat their hind parts down hard, at tables decorated with overflowing ashtrays and abandoned coffee cups, only to jump up again thirty seconds later. In and around these tables Johnny bobbed and weaved, emptying ashtrays, gathering cups and dumping them in the sink. This was the T.D.A. that nobody else wanted, a Therapeutic Duty Assignment that took up the little free time a client had between meals and meetings. Everybody in the house agreed that nobody did this one as well as Johnny, at any rate. He was a whirlwind, a hurricane, he was Mr. Clean in motion, a blitz of elbow grease and spray cleaner. Whenever he'd blown through, the place was spotless. The human traffic continued in and out with raucous, bustling transience except for one settled table of three: the stockbroker, the Teamster, and a plump hospice nurse from Kansas who'd recently lost her R.N. license for unauthorized use of various analgesic substances.

The Teamster was tapping his hand on a blue box containing a Pictionary game, looking first at one, then at another of his tablemates with eyes full of basset-hound hope; he couldn't play himself, as the simple drawing game required hands that didn't tremble, but he would watch other people play and then comment with strong opinion on their accuracy or lack thereof. The nurse, after a cursory professional glance at his tremors, got up and brought him a plastic-foam cup full of hot water with an herbal tea bag flowering darkly at the bottom. The stockbroker was asking Johnny questions as he cleaned, and the Teamster and the nurse slowly began to watch him as if he were television.

"It was my birthday," he said, "and I'd partied out of all the coke, but the booze was still making me snarky. So Jandi—my sis—she gets tired of my attitude, and she drops me off in the center of town, about two miles from her house. There was a pharmacy there on the corner, and it's just a tiny town over the South Dakota border, no big deal, and I get in there without any trouble and start sampling the Schedule Fours, the Dilaudid and things like that."

The nurse, who was still having what she called "pharmaceutical dreams," breathed slow and heavily, her lips parted and her eyes glazed with shame and excitement.

"How long were you in there?" she asked.

"About twenty minutes. So I'm fooling around, collecting a little pack of pills to take out with me, and I hear the cops outside. 'Come out with your hands on your head!' So I say I've got a gun and the first pig that comes in here, I'm going to blow him away."

"Did you?" asked the Teamster.

"What?"

"Have a gun."

"Nah. I had this slingshot I used for getting the squirrels in my girlfriend's back yard. Right after I say my piece, I go out, into a coma, bang on the floor. The cops don't know this, all they know is I'm not answering, so they call out the SWAT team, plus two helicopters from the news station, and they're trying to negotiate, talk me out of there, for six hours, and they're getting no response because I'm stone-solid out. I saw the news later, my friend Dog made a videotape, and here's this gal going, 'The situation is getting more tense as the alleged perpetrator refuses to negotiate,' and you can hear these chopper blades whirling around and there's searchlights swooping around everywhere, but I don't see a thing, because I'm out on the floor."

"The whole time?" the nurse asked.

The stockbroker opened a newspaper and put on a pair of light, gold-rimmed glasses. "Well, as a career option, pharmaceutical burglar is probably not the best thing in the world for you."

"Tell me about it. I've been at it since I was eighteen, and the good times are just about over. I better settle down."

He was talking while rinsing cups, but his gaze was locked on Merry, who'd come in and was sitting across the room with her new best girlfriend, Shana. They were whispering together, and, when Merry looked up, her eyes met his for a lucid, complicity-drenched moment. He knew he had an understanding with her that was incomprehensible to anyone else.

ON Saturday, before anyone could have a day off, they had to bring their assignments in to Grief Group. Johnny's had five people in it, and

FREE NAIL POLISH

Cool enough. Granted,
she has beautiful legs, you know.
Men's thoughts are continually drawn behind
the apron of her success,
or to the tank top of her access
to the secrets of the great and philosophic,
of the most polite spirits
that invest these semitropic airs.

I need a tragic future to invest in.
Getting no support from others, I—
wait, here it comes along the rails,
a slow train from Podunk, the ironed faces
of the passengers at each window expressing something precise
but nothing in particular.

Yes, the mooing woods around this station are
partly extreme,
and wire fences are deep within
some parts of them. We know not
what they're for, or why we snore
at a bug's trajectory
over the wallpaper's lilac lozenges.

—John Ashbery

Howie was the facilitator. The Teamster official from Weehawken had brought in a letter to his third wife and his five children, who lived in four different states.

“Wow,” Johnny said. “I guess you’re the original daddy rabbit.”

The Teamster blinked at him and said, “No shit. Except Bugs Bunny would have made a better father.” The windsurfer had brought in a letter to the Pacific Ocean. Some people had made lists of things they’d lost. Johnny didn’t do a list of the things he’d lost, because the list was too short: a couple of friends, a girlfriend, and his motorcycle. And time. Instead, he decided to write down the things he hadn’t had: a house to stay in longer than six months; a car less than seven years old; a mother after the age of six (killed by a Higher Power); a job for more than twelve weeks; a day without being afraid; a pair of running shoes that someone else hadn’t worn first; a girlfriend who wasn’t as messed up as he was; a conversation with someone in a store who wasn’t afraid he would steal something (because he was always about to steal something); a day when he didn’t get angry enough to hit someone; a day when he could sit down for twenty minutes; a good set of speakers for his car stereo.

“You’re on the pity pot,” said Leonard, one of the other clients. He was a thin man with bulging eyes, who was always confronting people—no nonsense, cruel to be kind, tough love.

Johnny’s face turned red and squeezed in on itself like a wet sponge. As if he hadn’t heard all that behavior-mod bullshit before. He could, if he wanted, make extremely short work of the skinny dude.

Howie cleared his throat. “This is Grief Group, Leonard, so it’s O.K. to feel grief for yourself here. Johnny, do you believe that some of those are things that you can have by staying sober one day at a time?”

Johnny knew the answer to that one. “Yeah.”

“Do you know that if you have to leave here you’ll be violating the terms of your probation?”

“I thought we were talking about grief issues.”

“Just a thought.”

Back in his room, he saw a letter on his pillow. A letter from Merry, who was making her own kind of list. They would leave in her car. They’d get her kids back. They’d settle in Flint, and she would get him work with her brother, who wasn’t speaking to her at the moment but when he saw how much she’d changed would cut them both a break. She’d go down on Johnny every morning before he went to work and she made breakfast. The kids would learn to call him Daddy. Johnny and she would join the P.T.A. Her brother was running for city council, and they’d help with his campaign. She knew they could do it. Love conquers all. Love is stronger than dope. Stronger than A.A. or treatment, too. She really wanted to go down on him. Every morning before breakfast. She needed him. Nobody could ever understand how much.

“WELL,” said the stockbroker, to whom, trembling, he had brought the note. “You know what amazes me? No matter how messed up and out of control a person gets, there is always someone who will, against all odds, continue to love him. Or her. Except, of course, for me. Since I’m usually in control. Anyway, I read this letter and all I smell is some kind of terror. Didn’t you do this before, fall in love in a treatment center?”

“Well, I once lived with a woman I met in treatment.”

“Didn’t Merry meet her husband in treatment? Didn’t they slide down the chute together?”

“This is different.”

“How?”

“My heart tells me.”

“I don’t mean to be crude, hon, but that is not your heart talking to you.”

Johnny hunched a little in his chair. How would she know? He watched her laying down her solitaire cards, peering over her gold-rimmed glasses as if butter wouldn’t melt in her mouth, as if she weren’t basically here on the very same rap he was.

“Do you know that everybody here likes you?” she asked him suddenly. “Do you know you’re a person with considerable people skills?” He just blinked at her, confused, and cracked his knuckles. “My husband says he doesn’t want to try again,” she went on, “and I can’t exactly say that I blame him, in all honesty, so the Teamster and the nurse and I are

[*Hillary not included.]

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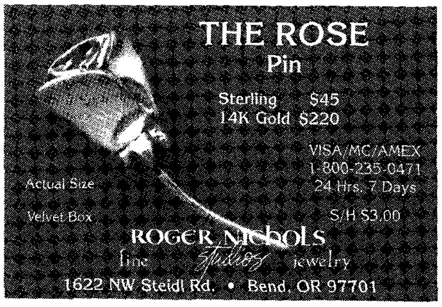
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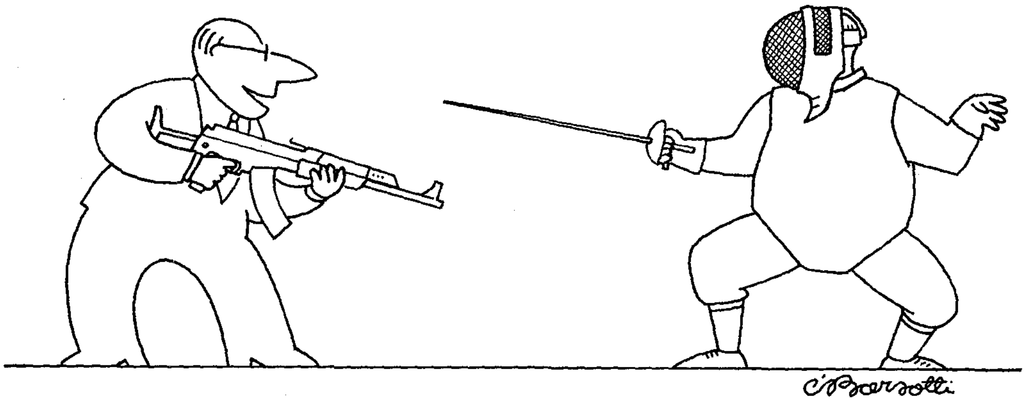

"Ever the gentleman, eh, Westbrook?"

going in together on a house. It's fairly close to here, and we'll be able to get to meetings easily. Two hundred a month including utilities gets you a room. We all have to be out of here in three weeks, when we get our medallions and head for the real thing. That is, if you can keep your little friend in your trousers until then."

At one in the morning, Johnny, who had always had strange sleeping habits, was sitting in the coffee room sorting piles of napkins to put in the dispensers. After that was done, he drew tattoo designs on the remaining napkins with a red felt-tip pen: birds of prey bursting out of a circle of flames, women with enormous hair and breasts holding machine guns, the Grim Reaper on a Harley-Davidson, a crown of thorns with three small, exquisite drops of blood dripping. The pictures gave him pangs; each image brought an old friend back the way the smell of something brings back an old place, and this was not the least bit pleasant or even voluntary, so he stopped for a while and fixed a cup of instant coffee. Drawing tattoo pictures on napkins wasn't what he saw himself doing tonight, anyway. He could, however, clearly picture taking his little friend into Merry's room. The night tech wasn't due to make his next round for another hour, and Merry would be glad to see him. Her roommate would look the other way, and in the dark room Merry would make a space for him, shift over in bed, and let him in under the covers. Of course, with his luck, they'd probably get caught two minutes into whatever sugar-sweet, naughty thing they might be going to do. Then what? Some different halfway house, all men, all just out of Stillwater. Another reëntry program. His ears started to burn from the dry heat coming out of the radiator, and he felt exhausted from thinking. He wasn't used to this kind of second-guessing, it was as if the stockbroker's voice were talking in his head. That's what Howie was always telling him to do—shut up and listen. That's where Howie said you found your Higher Power, from being still and opening your ears. Johnny moved his chair against the wall and tipped it rhythmically. Now he heard nothing but the buzzing of the fluorescent light, which had a particularly strange quality that evening, a rising and falling intonation. In fact, the quiet noise was not coming from the light at all but from the air duct right over his head. All at once, the sound clarified: it was people in their rooms, breathing in their sleep. Johnny wondered who they were—Merry? The stockbroker? The Teamster? Or the windsurfer, dreaming of waves? Johnny had never heard people breathing in their sleep before; either he'd been the first one to pass out hard or he'd been staying awake outdoors. In fact, if he'd thought about it at all, he might have thought breathing was something that stopped while you slept. But listening to this, this sound like a brook, it was like having a brand-new windup toy, a new thing to do—listening to people breathe in their sleep.

SUNDAY morning, Johnny was up early to help at the commissary. His favorite job, he did it faster than anyone else. Got the eggs boiled so he could ladle them out to people who didn't want scrambled, got extra bacon onto the plates of the people he knew best, extra jelly for the Teamster official, who liked to put it right onto his plate and sop it up with a piece of bread. By the time everybody started filing in and clattering past, Johnny had already made and put aside a bowl of cinnamon-sugar for people who wanted it on their toast. Marlena, the lunch lady, looked the other way, laughing when he pinched her cheek. As he was scooping out a dollop of scrambled eggs, he looked up to find Merry's two large, baby-blue headlights trained right on his face. She stood in front of him, shaking slightly but planted firm.

"I want mine poached," she said.

"We're working on poached," Johnny answered. "You'll have to wait."

SATURDAY, inexorable and comforting, came around again the way it always did, and Johnny brought in his assignment to Grief Group: a letter to his mother.

DEAR MOM,

Where are you now—with my Higher Power, ha, ha? My sister, your daughter, Jandi, wrote to tell me she's not sending me anymore money because she doesn't want to enable me. She also said she hopes I find my hearts peace. Some friends and I are moving into a house in St. Paul and maybe one of them will drive me up to Duluth to put flowers. Maybe not, tho, because I'll probably be to busy to come.

—*Your loving son*, JOHNNY

In the afternoon, all the out-of-state clients stayed inside, read their pamphlets, wrote letters, or conducted their intrigues. Johnny, no freeze-baby, went out walking by the Mississippi River. He didn't even wear gloves—you didn't wear gloves until it went into the double-digit subzeros—and his blue ski jacket he kept open, the sides of it swinging as he walked. The river was lined by steep banks, wooded trails, and rock ledges with caves inside, burrows where homeless men could crawl in and sleep. Two of them had been found dead there just last month, frozen and curled around their pints of Four Roses. A rose each for your liver, your kidneys, your spleen, and your heart. His feet took him on down the path to the water's edge, accompanying him with the soft slur of leaves under snow. Sometimes when people walked down here they would see a bald eagle. It would startle someone with the muffled thunder of its wings and with its unexpected size as it launched out of the silver-maple tree at the foot of the riverbank. Johnny wondered what he would do if he saw one. He'd like to bring one down with his slingshot, but he wouldn't be able to show it to anyone if he did. Maybe it would talk to him, the way the Indians said animals talked to them. Not that he had all that much respect for the Indians he'd met—a bunch of drunks who didn't have their shit together any more than he did. Then again, he reflected, you probably didn't run into the cream of anyone's crop in County Detox.

If he saw the eagle, he would run back for the stockbroker and the Teamster, who would never believe you could see something like that this close to downtown St. Paul. They'd call him a scout, a wild-ass country boy, a modern-day Davy Crockett. Down at the edge of the river, he looked around for signs of traps, thin chains leading down into the water with metal cages below them, just right for a muskrat's head. They check in but they don't check out. As Johnny crouched by a small rock, he was nearly thrown to the ground by a shattering screech. He turned and gaped. It was only a crow, which had suddenly appeared like a jagged shard of black light, with a wingspan over a foot wide. In her claws she clutched a red-and-white takeout-chicken carton. She flapped past Johnny, so close and low that he could see her eyes, wild and blank. With a muted flapping, she landed in an oak tree a few yards up the bank, where, if he squinted his eagle eyes, he could see her nest.

Johnny stood with his jaw loose, not a jounce or bounce anywhere in his feet, absolutely still. And hushed. Crows were better than eagles, anyway; look how they played the hand they were dealt, eating anything at all, arguing and talking with other crows, proceeding through the day without getting their name on the endangered-species list. He decided, by way of greeting, to throw a small rock at her, just to get her attention, to make her say something, to be part of her day. *Hey. Crow. You. Crow.* ♦

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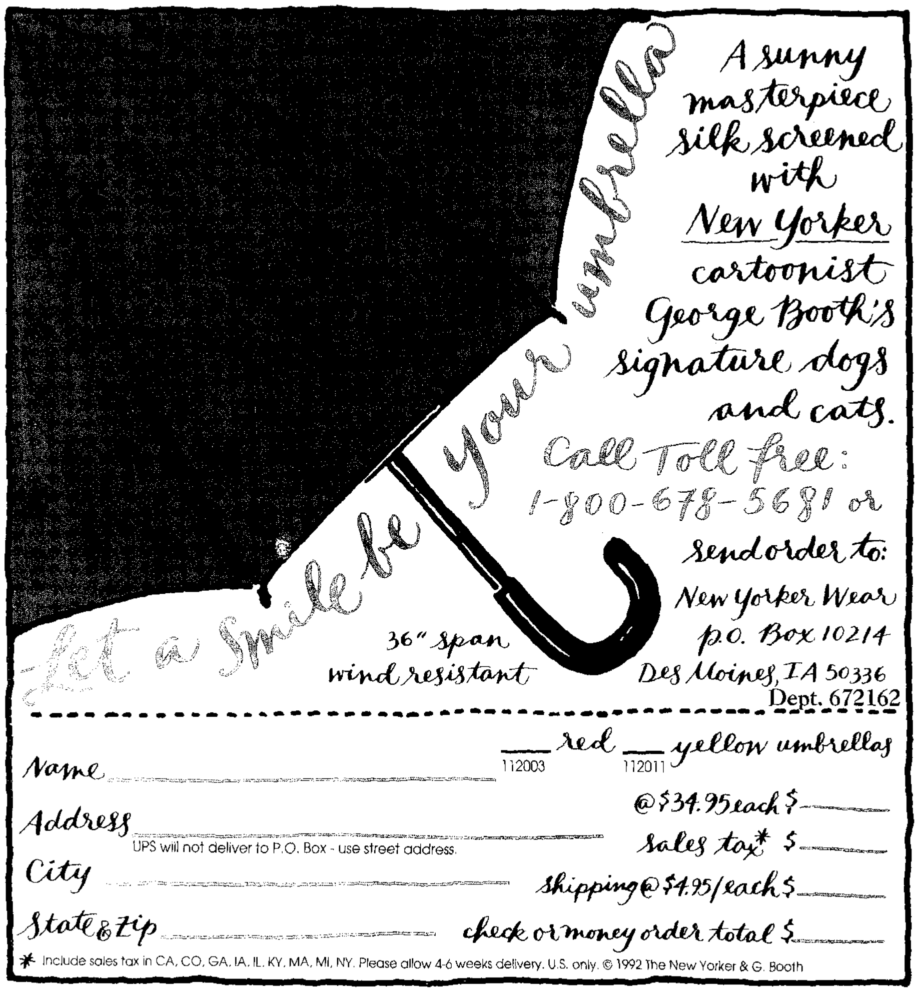
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THE CRITICS

ON TELEVISION

BEAT IT

BY JAMES WOLCOTT

WHETHER it was Weegee's flashbulbs to the face or Walter Winchell's Morse-code rhythms, tabloid journalism in the pre-television era was known as a creature of nervous energy—a night prowler. It stayed on the scene only long enough to identify the body. Where establishment papers like the *Times* and the Washington *Post* cast the city in institutional gray, the tabloid press was film noir in prose, a dim-lit back lot of morgues, diners, fire escapes, holding pens, fleabag hotels, waterfront dives, all-night movie theatres. In "The New Journalism" Tom Wolfe evokes the romance of the tabloid beat: "Chicago, 1928, that was the general idea. . . . Nights down at the saloon listening to 'Back of the Yards' being sung by a baritone who was only a lonely blind bulldyke with lumps of milk glass for eyes." Such reveries were rooted in the newspaper movies of the thirties—urban tales in which newshounds played by James Cagney or Pat O'Brien broke stories by sheer nerve and footwork. In such populist entertainments, rough diamonds outranked cultured pearls. Priding itself on its streetwise lack of stuffy pretension, the tabloid press could strut in life and legend as the champion of the underdog—the gravelly voice of the people.

But as Richard Ben Cramer demonstrates in his "Frontline" documentary "Tabloid Truth" (PBS, February 15th) tabloid journalism has escalated from a small-scale guerrilla operation to a heavily bankrolled multinational assault force. Cramer is best known as the author of "What It Takes," an Electric Kool-Aid Acid Test look at the 1988 election campaign which was so wordy and hefty that wags took to calling the book "What It Weighs." Here he can't dart in and out of the principals' gibbering brains, Tom Wolfe-style. He has to take a drier, more diagnostic approach. His subject is how the tabloid sensibility became a reborn beast. The British invented the modern tabloid, he notes, citing such London dailies as the *Sun* and the *News of the World*. The godfather of the modern tabloid is, of course, their owner, Rupert Murdoch, who recognized that celebrity is now the key component of muckraking. In his colorful rags, it is open season on the private lives of politicians, soap-opera stars, royalty, and rock singers. British hacks are considered ballsier than their American cousins, less burdened by ethical niceties. A show like Fox's "A Current Affair" is staffed with such mercenaries, Cramer observes. "The big guns are all imported: Brits or Australians, who are just Brits with bad accents. They all brought the craft from Fleet Street. America turned it into TV." The most conspicuous is Steve Dunleavy, a longtime Murdoch employee whose pompadour makes him look like an aging rockabilly singer. He has such a tabloid mentality that when he talks his teeth become typewriter keys.

"Tabloid Truth" is a case study of an especially rabid scavenger hunt—an inside look at a feeding frenzy. Cramer was allowed to record the behind-the-scenes battles among the tabloid shows, to examine how they elbow for bargaining position on a breaking story. On a Sunday morning in August, 1993, Don Ray, a freelance television reporter in the San Fernando Valley, received a phone call saying that search warrants had been issued for Michael Jackson's Neverland ranch. The subject of the inquiry was possible child molestation. "That woke me up," says Ray, who at the first mention of Neverland made a joke about the police serving papers on Peter Pan (which, in a sense, they were). He heard that the police had used a locksmith to gain entry to the compound. Ray was able to find the locksmith and verify the tip. The news first appeared on the local NBC affiliate. At the smell of blood, the hacks exploded from their holding pens. Reporters swarmed to the scene from all over the world. One of Cramer's interviewees describes seeing a colleague from *Paris Match* dash from a plane in Los Angeles, knocking aside old people in wheelchairs.

It's like a Preston Sturges movie without the fun, this stampede of venality, this freak-show fresco of lawyers, media hustlers, paid informants, private detectives in bad toupees, and members of the Jackson clan, including the queen of the tarantulas, LaToya. What made a Sturges movie fun was that the characters had appetites beyond avarice—a chewy interest in their own idiosyncrasies. The players in "Tabloid Truth" are slick enough to slide under the door. They're faxes in human form, postmodern communiqués. They don't display enough inner doubt even to be hypocrites. When people are hypocrites, they're at least paying lip service to propriety. The characters in the Jackson saga are past such pretense. They're up-front with their ransom demands. Former employees, like Jackson's Filipino housekeepers (who have collection plates for faces), peddle their shoddy stories to the tabloids. A former porn star runs interference for a French couple who once worked for Jackson, pimping their story for a percentage of the sale. The agent for Jackson's own parents asks for a hundred-thousand-dollar fee for them to be interviewed on PBS. The meat's on the hook, the money's on the table.

As Cramer explains, the networks can't compete with the tabloids; they can't strike top-dollar deals. Handicapped by policies barring them from paying sources, the networks entice notorieties by offering them prestige airtime—glow space with the stars. A clip on "Tabloid Truth" shows Heidi Fleiss being interviewed by Connie Chung on CBS's "Eye to Eye," their toothy chat including a blatant plug for Fleiss's line of pajama wear. The networks play me-too with the tabloids. The exposés of "Hard Copy" and "A Current Affair," once consigned to the bin, have become the lead items on the evening news. "The carnival sideshows are now the main event," Cramer says. Old cowhands at the tabloids observe, rightly, that the techniques that were once derided by traditional newsmen (hokey dramatizations, hidden cameras, ambush attacks) are now standard fare on the networks' own magazine shows.

It must be admitted that the tabloid TV shows exert a hold on audiences stronger than just eye-catching technique can account for. They tap into our underground sense that the secret history of the world—its most profane mysteries—exists somewhere on missing pieces of film. It's the fascination that makes the characters in Don DeLillo's novel "Running Dog" so avid in their search for home movies from Hitler's bunker, and accounts for the endless replays of the Zapruder footage of Kennedy's assassination. In the video age, secrets surface fast. No highlight reel of our low-life era would be complete without shots of Jennifer Levin's killer, Robert Chambers, twisting a doll's head and laughing, Rob Lowe ruining his reputation in a hotel room with a minor, Amy Fisher playing with her hair and chattering away about what luxury make of car she wants—all these clips courtesy of tabloid TV. With their refrigerator-hum sound and dead visuals, they seem to be events recorded in some limbo of lopped-off feeling. They owe their aesthetic to Andy Warhol, who pioneered the art of sucking the atmosphere off the screen, leaving a solid block of inertia.

In the Michael Jackson case, the prime find was the footage on "A Current Affair" of Jackson taking one of his boy pals to the F. A. O. Schwarz toy store on Fifth Avenue after hours, so that they could have free run of the place without causing a mob scene. It was meant to be magical, having a toy store all to themselves. The store's surveillance cameras observed them trying to turn F. A. O. Schwarz into their own amusement park. They played games, checked out the shelves. Anything the kid wanted, Michael would buy. But, as the "Current Affair" commentator noted, the child in question failed to light up like Christmas. He wasn't running up and down the aisles with the wild glee of Kevin in "Home Alone 2." He seemed restless, irritable, at one point swiping Jackson's hand away from his arm—a rebuff that spoke of familiarity between the two. (A starstruck fan would hardly have treated Jackson so matter-of-factly.) And Michael Jackson, a spectre in his hat and long coat, didn't have the dreamy disembodiedness of a boy-man lost in a fantasy world. He had the entitled air of a star exercising his prerogative. Until, that is, he bent down to help the kid try on a pair of roller blades—a creepy, ambiguous touch of debasement.

CNN
NBC
CBS
ABC
FOX

Richard Ben Cramer's "Tabloid Truth" examines the Michael Jackson case and how the tabloid sensibility became a reborn beast.

ROBERT DEMICHIELL

"Tabloid Truth" doesn't debate whether or not Michael Jackson is guilty of child molestation. And Cramer shows that the tabloids themselves lose sight of guilt or innocence, fact or fabrication, once they begin barrelling toward their target. A tornado doesn't care where it tears a path. Any hope of a proper investigation into the allegation of child molestation was wasted by the whirling thicket of illegal tapes, stolen documents, self-appointed experts, and dubious eyewitness accounts. The fallout from this latest media spasm was a stream of money. Those with the most to sell took a long drink at the spout. And the ratings! As Cramer concludes, the lesson is "Everybody wins—except one kid who'll bare the mark of this commerce like a scarlet letter."

Leaving aside the fact that that kid and his parents have been mightily compensated for his scarlet letter (although the child's face is scrambled on TV and in photographs, his classmates all know he's the one), Cramer is correct in suggesting that in the tabloid business shame is the name of the game. On celebrities, the tabloids inflict shame, mocking them for getting old, fat, drunk, poor, or obscure. Pick up any supermarket tabloid and see how it exults in mapping the fallen flesh of former beauties, shooting reclusive stars through super-zoom lenses for that special bacterial effect. (Death offers no defense: Elvis was photographed in his coffin.) Turn on any tabloid TV show

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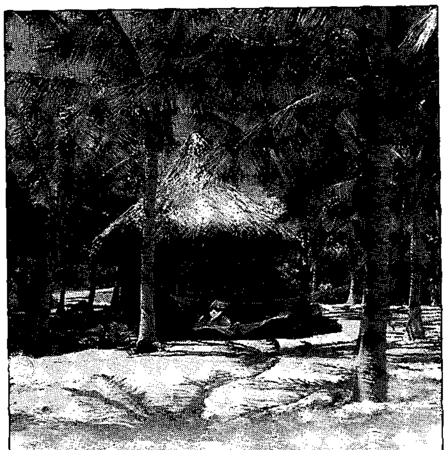
and see how it dogs younger stars, like Marky Mark or Shannen Doherty, hoping they'll flip. The tabloids function as a dysfunctional parent, broadcasting the bad thoughts they've helped put into the viewer's head.

With non-celebrities, shame is not a sinful condition but a sad consequence, the scattered petals of innocence lost. America's lost innocence has become an article of faith in the popular mind. We lost it first with President Kennedy's assassination, then with Vietnam, then again with the last thrash of the counterculture (Altamont, the Manson gang), yet again with Watergate. Our loss of innocence has become a hardy perennial. It's as if the country kept growing a new maidenhead after each deflowering. A child is the ideal incarnation of innocence, its charity poster. When not recycling J.F.K.–Marilyn Monroe–Elvis factoids, tabloid TV takes genuine tragedies like the abduction-murder of Polly Klaas and the ordeal of Katie Beers and turns them into instant mini-parables on our loss of innocence. (A recent segment on "Inside Edition," about priests molesting boys, was promoted with the teaser "Innocence Lost.") Individual crimes become incorporated into an archetypal rite of sacrifice played out in the once safe confines of suburbia. The tabloids take a fetishistic interest in the stuffed animals and scrapbook pictures of children who are missing or have been murdered or molested. When the victim's parents cry, the camera comes in tight, as if to collect the tears.

Those are honest tears, but the emotional bath that the tabloids draw is a wallow of bad faith. A suppressed part of the American psyche must want to slay its children, trash that innocence; otherwise why would we make such pornography of their pain, and their parents' pain? On some unconscious level, we surely desire what we dread. The tabloids' horror-film reënactments of crimes against children are meant to get us off in the back room of our armchair sadism. The crimes are then dolled up as made-for-TV movies, where the child actors are even dewier, more corruptible. Our sense of collective innocence seems to depend on an endless conveyor belt of victims fed into the camera. Michael Jackson's accuser is only the latest. How it must madden the tabloids that they can't show his face. ♦



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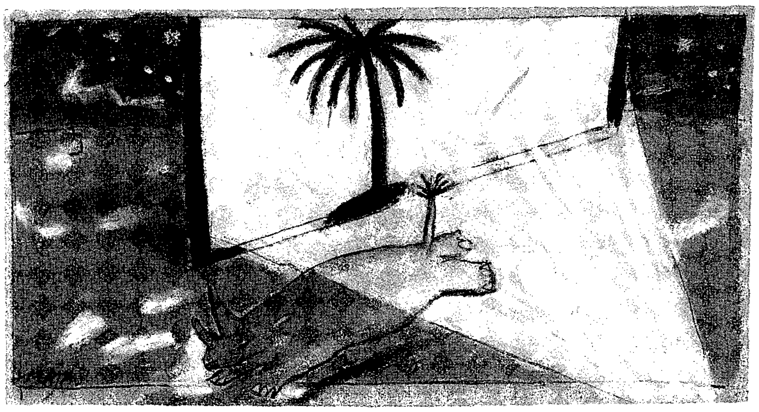

DANIEL MAJA

"BLINK" stars Madeleine Stowe as Emma Brody, a fiddle player in a Chicago band. When we first see her, she is playing with her eyes shut tight, as if in rapture; at the end of the number, she opens them to reveal milky, blue-gel irises, drained of life. My heart sank at this point, because it could only mean one of two kinds of movie: almost-perfect-humanoids-on-the-loose or blind-woman-in-trouble. It turned out to be the latter, with a twist: Emma is a blind woman who has her sight restored and *then* gets into trouble. The restoration itself is a strange affair: as the bandages come off, the director, Michael Apted, switches to a first-person camera, so that we can share in Emma's blast of light, the dawn of her new day. It shouldn't have been hard to make the scene painful and daunting, but Apted is too pleased by the look of his special effects—a molten, trippy blur, which suggests that, far from sitting in a hospital room, Emma is in fact lying out in the sun listening to late Beatles.

Things improve when she goes home: there's a lovely, unsettling moment when she stays in and gets drunk all by herself, a lithe figure in green velvet sprawled on a red couch. The cinematographer, Dante Spinotti, deepens and saturates the colors as if to plunge her into the delights of everyday vision. Maybe that's why she needs the drink: the world is too much to take in, and she can't bear to look at it for long. The heroine of Gide's "Pastoral Symphony" underwent the same process, and threw herself in a river when she saw, amid all the unimaginable beauty, the suffering on people's faces—suffering that she herself had caused. But Emma is no innocent, and for a while you wonder what kind of sexy, treacherous voyage of discovery this movie could have been. Instead, we get the usual: Emma sees a murderer—the serial variety, of course, Hollywood having declared the old-fashioned, one-off killer out of style. Given the wooziness of Emma's vision, her testimony would hardly stand up in court, but the movie trundles over this objection and gets on with the job of turning her into a wanted woman. The killer wants her dead, and the cops want her alive; one cop in particular, Hallstrom, wants her so much that he quotes Longfellow at her in the street. "That's disgusting," she replies, quite rightly. Hallstrom is supposed to be a lecherous cynic, but in that case they shouldn't have given the role to Aidan Quinn, who is cursed with spaniel eyes and a low, crooning delivery, which guarantee him the sweetest nature in American movies. Tough luck, but there's nothing he can do about it.

To begin with, "Blink" rolls along at quite a lick, pumped up with high spirits, but you gradually sense the whole enterprise seizing up. Apted's direction develops cramp, and Dana Stevens' screenplay falls into the standard absurdities: a mad motive for the villain, a sex interlude for the happy couple, and a nocturnal shoot-out to round it all off. In the darkness, Emma's assailant whistles "Three Blind Mice"—a juicy little detail, you might think, except that it was lifted straight from "The Mousetrap" and is therefore at least forty-one years old. Nothing in the second half of "Blink" is remotely interesting, which only confirms one's suspicion that Hollywood script conferences are hooked on hooks and not much else: I can picture a bunch of executives sitting around a table sipping thoughtfully on their Pellegrinos, hearing words like "blind" and "killer," and nodding in agreement. Later on, driving home, they all suddenly think, Hey, how does it turn out in the end? Damn it, I clean forgot to ask. Oh, well, no sweat—somebody will take care of it.

But nobody does, and that's a pity. Ever since Chaplin, cinema has cultivated a creepy fascination with blindness, perhaps because the cruelty of the affliction acquires an extra piquancy in a medium founded on public spectacle—all those pairs of eyes, hundreds of them, staring up out of the dark at someone who can never return their gaze. We feel reinforced in our status as privileged intruders, and directors have dug deep into that voyeurism and come up with some pretty shameless shocks, almost all of them involving women. Madeleine Stowe joins Mia Farrow in "See No Evil" and Audrey Hepburn in "Wait Until Dark" on the list of threatened beauties. It's a cheap trick, and a tired one, and it ignores a more complicated possibility—that, far from being easy to exploit, the blind are hard to reach, padlocked in a darkness of their own. In the Modigliani show now running at London's Royal Academy, there is a wonderful drawing of a blind woman: she appears to be turning away from the artist, priding herself on the distance between them, offering up an exquisite likeness but precious little else, as if to remind us just what "likeness" means—a facsimile, something you struggle to capture while the real thing escapes.

The dramatic implications of this are rich and forbidding, and cinema has barely begun to investigate them. On paper, "Scent of a Woman" must have seemed like pure baloney, but Al Pacino took hold of a feel-good script and shook it until you didn't know *what* to feel—whether, indeed, you could ever hope to feel your way into this man's soul at all. "I'm in the dark here!" he bellowed, and as the line died away you heard both a cry for help and a roar of unbreakable pride. Madeleine Stowe, in her lighter, more buoyant way, provides the same kind of uneasy standoff with the world; like Pacino, she fends off other characters more readily than she welcomes them, and her cool self-confidence drifts out toward the audience. Traditionally, we are invited to "relate" to heroes or heroines, as if to bless them with our sympathy, but Emma doesn't need that kiss of life—she can get on very nicely without us. At the start of the movie, she comes across as pushy and unfazed, calling all the shots; as she is wheeled toward the operating theatre, the doctor tells her to count sheep or, if not sheep, "something you know a lot of." Back comes a wicked cackle, reminding you of the single best thing about Madeleine Stowe: the fact that a woman of such ethereal and flawless looks should also have the dirtiest laugh in show biz.

You could hear it when she sat and modelled for Julianne Moore in "Short Cuts"—a scene so smiling and relaxed that you hardly even noticed she had no clothes on. Altman, not surprisingly, was the first director to look beyond her lusciousness and realize that Stowe was at least as smart as she was vulnerable; life seems to move in and out of her control, so that the simple act of watching her takes on a mild suspense. She can count herself unlucky to be a star just now, when there's a whole load of quick, brainy actresses and Hollywood hasn't a clue what to do with them; it comes on like a rich dork on a date, throwing money at these women and hoping for the best, then getting impatient and trying to rough them up or scare them out of their wits. You can't imagine Katharine Hepburn or Rosalind Russell standing for such treatment; they held tight to their wits and still came out on top. Stowe fights hard for that level of freedom, but Apted slowly nails her down. Early on, when a female reporter comes to interview her about her newfound sight, it is Emma who seems the more intrigued; with her foggy gaze travelling dreamily over the woman's body, she asks, "Are you pretty?" She seems ready for anything, and more than once we hear rumors of her success with men; but the movie is too coy to show us any hard evidence, and gradually drains its heroine of mental energy and sexual verve. When she's accused by Hallstrom of being sweet on her doctor, she goes all gooey and replies, "My eyes are filled with someone else." That could be a sick joke about corneal transplants, but I fear not; Emma is simply following the disastrous example of her namesake, Mme. Bovary, and trading her stab at independence for the warm, ill-fated promise of true love. The low point comes when she has to walk bare-breasted to a bunch of red roses and look pensive. Behind me in the theatre, a voice said, "Hey, poetic."

"Blink" is not a disaster by any means; it's well played, lit with panache, and cheered up by a busy, folksy band called the Drovers. And the women's clothes—daffy and decorous, two steps up from grunge, with neat little hats—are a perfect rebuff to the uniform swankiness of most thrillers. But the film still feels fake, with the performers beating against slabs of artificial emotion and prefabricated plot. Every now and then, something slips through, under the studio radar: a flash of real anger, or a good joke, or, best of all, the funny, pointless scene in which Emma and her friend Candice—played by Laurie Metcalf, sidekick extraordinaire, and a good match for Stowe—go and watch basketball. You can hardly hear what they're saying above the din, and Candice spends most of her time venting her overwhelming love for Michael Jordan, but she pauses just long enough to accuse Emma of having lured lovers with "that whole blind-woman thing." They laugh about it, as well they might: they've just seen through the entire movie.

CORRECTION OF THE WEEK

[*From the newsletter of the Canadian Jesuit Missions*]

OUR MISTAKE

Fr. J. P. Horrigan, S.J., the executive director of Canadian Jesuit Missions, did not travel to India in March with the American singer Rosemary Clooney. He went with Gerry Cooney, of the Montreal consulting group Universalia.

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BOOKS

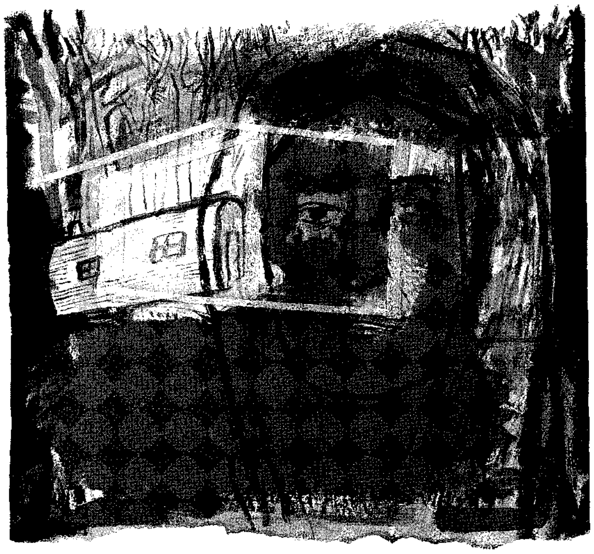
PARADISE IN AQUA VINYL

BY ANNA SHAPIRO

Merry Men
by Carolyn Chute
(Harcourt Brace; $24.95)

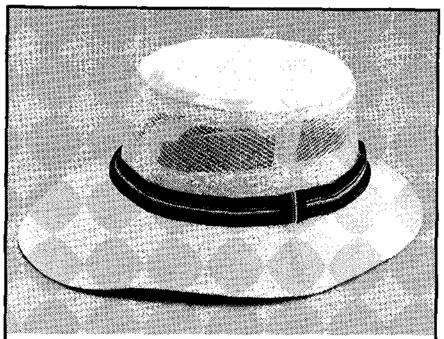
WHEN Carolyn Chute first appeared on the literary scene, in 1985, with "The Beans of Egypt, Maine," a novel about the decadent joys at the bottom of rural society, a spate of articles and reviews described her almost as if she were a dog who had miraculously come forward to tell us about the life of dogs. They emphasized whatever resemblance could be found between the author and what she had created—as though it were beyond the laws of nature that a poor, little-educated person could "rise" to write a book. It has happened often enough, but perhaps not in this case: Chute *had* dropped out of high school, and she became very poor (as most beginning writers are), but in fact her father had been a salesman, and her childhood, she was quoted as saying, had been "boring" and "sheltered." When she wrote about the trailer-and-shack-dwelling Beans and Letourneaus, a violent lot whose men fecklessly bred with their own relatives (or simply hijacked neighborhood women), she was a bit like a middle-class teen-ager romanticizing life in Greenwich Village: these people were, in her novelistic imagination, hip. In "The Beans of Egypt" and "Letourneau's Used Auto Parts," the book that followed it, she was in your face with their violent habits and their gritty surroundings, as if these details were somehow groovy. She was a would-be white-trash Imamu Amiri Baraka at his angriest: Say it loud, I'm a redneck and I'm proud.

In "Merry Men," the idiom is identifiable with the world of the earlier books—"outdoor" as a noun takes no "s," and the half-swallowed syllables "ayep" serve as an all-purpose linguistic tool—and once again the action is set in the invented town of Egypt, Maine. But where earlier versions of the town's citizens were written larger than life—to be mythic joke yokels—Chute means this Egypt to be more soberly realistic. One feels the author's zeal this time to leave nothing out, from the mill to the drugstore to the covered bridge, from moss frozen in the woods at deer-hunting season to a set of abandoned chipped Blue Willow plates or generations-old recipes. This is a heavy salvage operation, covering six hundred and ninety-five generous pages and about thirty years in the lives of four main characters: the town's gravedigger, its road commissioner, a nob photographer, and a teenage girl. The author's tone is newly mature, if sometimes didactic. In addressing the dubious gains of social progress, the book is an elegy for a culture that is being wiped out as surely as if its bearers were given nothing more to wrap themselves in than blankets infested with smallpox.


Carolyn Chute's new novel is an elegy to the endangered yokel culture of Egypt, Maine.

KAREN CALDICOTT

The gravedigger is the book's Robin



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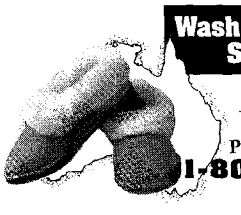

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Hood figure: Lloyd Barrington, who makes his début at age eight by planting trees for "ladies"—as he childishly but chivalrously calls women—and by sneaking out at night to refoliate town streets where older people dimly remember trees to have flourished. Most of the seedlings are fated to be heedlessly torn up or trampled by heavy road and lawn equipment. But the planting is a poetic as well as a proto-environmentalist gesture, and the fat young Lloyd writes poems, too, which are proudly stuck to the refrigerator by one of his resident uncles. When Lloyd eventually goes to college—by this time, attractively muscular and bearded—his quixotic methods of combatting progress are even less welcomed by the community, which he unrequitedly adores. Officially, he studies to be a social worker, and when people around town talk about this they pretend not to know the difference between sociology and socialism. Where Lloyd is concerned, they are not far wrong.

The population that is Chute's subject—her cause—has vivid clarity through the child Lloyd's eyes. She best exercises her aptitude for exactness of physical and moral description in a long chapter where he is still only "8¾," a perspective that gives the reader the pleasure of dual vision, in which recognition of your own past self clashes ironically with a better-informed adult view. "Every road you take, there's somebody to wave to and blow the horn," Lloyd thinks as he accompanies his father, Edmund, around town. "Or else you got to stop the truck and talk a million years to someone standing by their mailbox." And irony turns into comedy when Lloyd interprets the sexual subtext of his household. Edmund is *quite* the merry man—"puttin' the pickle," as an uncle expresses it, to everyone else's wife (though he is not portrayed uncritically, as Chute's earlier force-of-nature fertility infielders were). When one of Edmund's flames gives him a blackberry pie as a love token, Lloyd's understanding of the gift gets taped to the refrigerator:

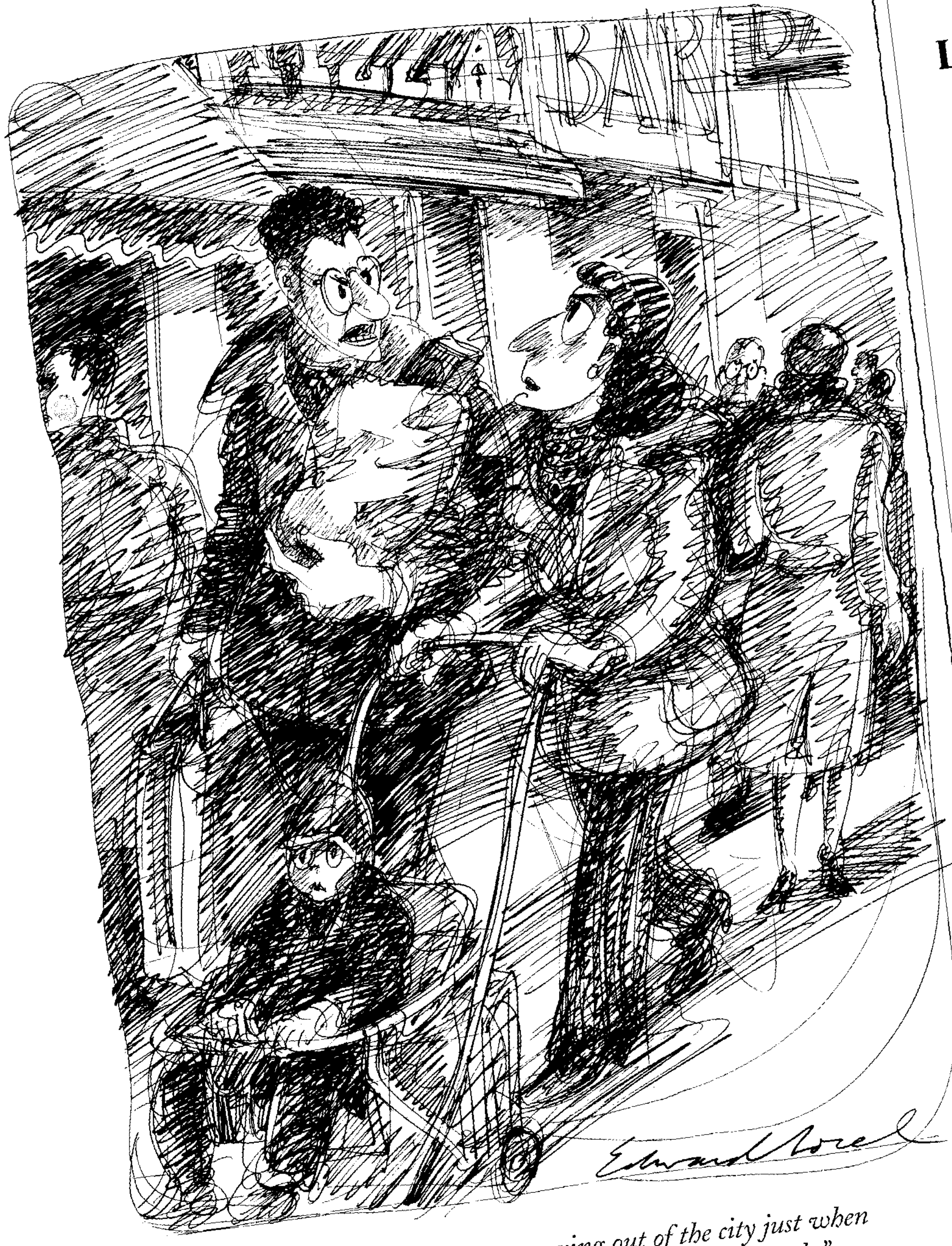
> Ladies give peepil nice pies.
> Then you give them a pickl.

Chute palpably takes sides for or against her characters in a way that can feel punitive. Lloyd has a wrong-side-of-the-blanket half brother, Forest Johnson, Jr., whose youth of extravagant, unsatisfied lust is as sympathetic as it is perplexed. But after he inherits the business of maintaining the town's roads, you realize that he's the anti-Robin to Lloyd's Hood; he actually fires people in order to rehire them at lower pay. You find yourself turning against Chute for beating up on him, but then she succeeds in arousing feelings richer than mere indignation simply by the amplitude and firmness of her representation, as when Forest's wife considers the family of a destitute former employee:

> Peggy has seen this wife of Brian Began at the IGA, babies in the shopping cart, not much room for the food. The wife is an oldish-looking young girl with a vast rear end in stretchy butterscotch color pants or aqua print or stained pink ones, always the kind of colors that make a vast rear look vaster. . . . And those kids together . . . They glare at you. But amongst themselves is such a cozy-looking trust. . . . And among them and with the wife . . . is the presence of Brian Began though he isn't there. They seem to . . . advertise him.

Certainly the white rural poor are a population as long-suffering, if not as conspicuously kept down, as Americans of other races. (And, likewise, they include a preponderance of non-Beanish, ordinarily upright types.) What was always most original in Chute's take on them—and what is made both more explicit and more palatable in "Merry Men"—is her rejection of the polite middle-class values that have led equally poor but immigrant Americans to leap in one generation out of linguistic slums and ghettos into the well-modulated tones of, say, Dreiser's novels or a book like Henry Roth's "Call It Sleep." Maybe because she is writing about people who have been just where they are for two hundred years, Chute is against the homogenizing forces of assimilation. As in her earlier novels, she opts for a certain roughness of diction in the narration: she prefers ellipses to commas, dashes, or semicolons, insists on "beller" for "bellow," and even invents words—"nimblish," "frisksome," "feely," "pissed-offishly," "glamoury." This time, though, the arc of her vision has expanded to embrace all classes, and there are some impeccably observed set pieces, among them a meeting of the blandly callous town selectmen.

About halfway through, the novel starts to sprawl. Jail, alcoholism, deafness, prize-winning horse teams,



"Forget it. We're not moving out of the city just when I'm making more money than all our friends."

• •

and the abduction of children by well-off grandparents erupt into the various lives, and the discontinuous chain of consequence is often more magnetic than what you are meant to pay attention to. Lloyd takes on his father's grave-tending duties—he uses his education as a kind of private vice, engaging in Yippie-style political theatre that includes mischief with Forest's road equipment—but the half brothers barely meet. The adult Lloyd is in any case a distantly seen entity, more symbol than substance.

Even less substantial—and somewhat disingenuously crafted—is the photographer: Gwen, or "the rich widow," who seems to come not so much from Maine as from the house of Atreus. (Her mother murdered her father, slept with her brother, and, on the morning of Gwen's first menstrual period, sprayed air-freshener in the kitchen with emergency-level urgency.) When Gwen is a girl, you feel sorry for her, but as a wealthy woman she's almost a cliché: she longs for the walking wet dream that Lloyd is in her eyes, a brawny he-man who spouts poetry and offers acute psychoanalytic insights. But Chute isn't going to let her have him simply because Gwen is

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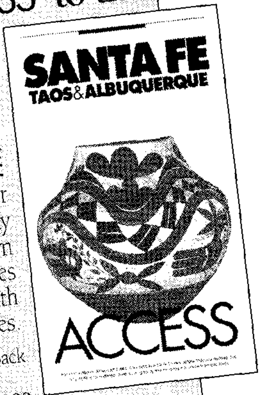

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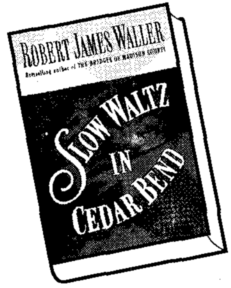
rich enough to solve all the town's problems. Gwen is the character hardest hit by Chute's judgmental schematism, which denounces anyone with bourgeois values. Maybe the point is that if Gwen's millions were used to return the recently closed mill to the unemployed workers, or to buy back the land that the paper company is clear-cutting, the town would end up like her house—so gentrified that its origins as a farm are obliterated, right down to a cabinet, still filled with cans, jars, and Christmas cards, that's been covered over with Sheetrock. Chute hates this character so much that Gwen's thoughts and speech are as inauthentic as her beige living room, and inflicting them on a reader is sheer cruelty. Here and elsewhere, you're reduced to noticing that the characters' incidental qualities are being arbitrarily placed under the headings of Virtuous and Damned: slow drivers are good people and fast ones not; beards are good, willowy women not; dirt and disorder good; and so on. You could irritate yourself to death sorting each quality into its proper column.

The figure who brings release from this Manichaean Ping-Pong is more a Joan of Arc than a Robin Hood. The white-blond teen-age Anneka DiBias, the daughter of Forest's underpaid mechanic, becomes the unlikely mouthpiece through whom the real agents of unemployment, dispossession, and death—from lack of guaranteed medical care, as it happens—get their fair blame. (These agents are, for the record, the unquestioned application of new technology, the amalgamation of smaller companies into mega-corporations, and the powerlessness of ordinary people's votes beside the massed power of money which such corporate monoliths represent.) Anneka is an inspired political thinker, who attracts TV news coverage for demonstrations she has set up against hunting laws; invents a kind of counter-Monopoly called the Minimum Wage Game (everybody loses); and says "ain't." She regards school as "just obedience training." Her greatest wish is to be a farmwife.

If Jude could have figured out at the beginning of "Jude the Obscure" that he just wanted to be a farmworker instead of yearning toward the university, Thomas Hardy would have had no book. But Jude was all ambition. Anneka, on the other hand, does not want to be an exception, even though she's exceptional. She sees that there is a betrayal involved in "self-improvement," a ruthlessness to it: to attain it, you leave behind what you love. Like Jude, Martin Eden, at the end of Jack London's novel of self-improvement, regrets his course, and the "beggar maid" in Alice Munro's stunning story cycle of that title fumes with resentment at the presumption of superiority in the class to which she aspires; but these characters have all listened to the snake and left the Garden of Eden. Anneka's refusal to leave it may be the latest twist on cultural relativism. Or her refusal may be as old as Tolstoy, Rousseau, Huckleberry Finn, and the Bible when it cautions against the spiritual expense of gaining the world.

What is radical in Chute's vision is her perception that you have Paradise to begin with, complete with aqua vinyl furniture. I don't know if this book will make people who flinch at immobilized mobile homes or yards full of car hulks suddenly see the cruel side of having license plates that say "VACATIONLAND" (Maine's slogan). They may flinch just as strongly at the robust boisterousness of Chute's sly, fierce women, who tease each other with phrases like "Carla's on low pilot" or use the word "wicked" to mean "very" (as in "wicked expensive"). For readers like me, who have lived in rural New England, it will feel like coming home to encounter in print this lexicon, which has already been largely supplanted even there. From the perspective of readers who are urban, assimilated, and middle-class, though, Anneka's rebellion against homogeneity may appear to be overstated. It contains (despite her denials) elements of mental gentrification, as a result of her untutored but extensive reading. That is, her enlightenment—by way of self-education as well as the school of hard knocks—makes her the kind of liberal her own class despises, though their interests would be far better served if they saw things her way. But the clear message is that you must stick with your class regardless, and the final outcome of the book is uncompromising. Chute seems to present a terrible choice: to be ordinary and risk losing even the humblest paradise or to lose your soul by joining the destroyers. She certainly does not overstate the condition of poor people, for whom their heritage and their children may be all their treasure. ◆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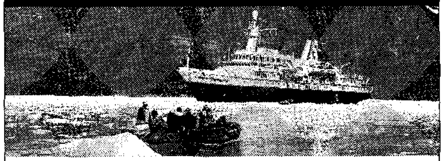
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BOOKS BRIEFLY NOTED

FICTION

Brazil

by John Updike

(Knopf; $23)

IN Updike's novel, our vast South American neighbor emerges as a country both ancient and new, innocent and slightly seedy. The story, based on the legend of Tristan and Iseult, follows the twenty-two-year relationship of Tristão, a black street kid, and Isabel, a bored white beauty from a well-connected Carioca family. They meet (he picks her up, actually, on the beach, where, with a razor blade tucked into his skimpy swimming trunks, he mugs gringo tourists), they fall in love, and—fleeing her money- and color-conscious relatives, and, in a sense, reversing the evolution of Brazil itself—they embark on a series of new lives: first in middle-class São Paulo, then in a gold-mining camp, and, finally, deep in the Mato Grosso. Readers used to the suburban Updike will find a few familiar hallmarks: some steamy sex, for example (marred occasionally by the author's insistence on referring to Tristão's penis as his "yam"), and settings so evocatively described that they become revelatory of the people who inhabit them. But in many ways this novel, Updike's sixteenth, is a radical departure. It's part travelogue and part research project, complete with bibliography. Updike also adopts a kind of elevated dialogue that's an odd mixture of contemporary slang, Portuguese-in-translation, and the language of epic. Most surprising of all, the book makes a breathtaking swerve into magic realism, the favorite technique of so many Brazilian fiction writers. But here the true magic *is* the realism: Updike explains his super-natural transformations, and their consequences, with such literal exactness that they seem touchingly normal and inevitable.

GENERAL

Live from the Battlefield

by Peter Arnett

(Simon & Schuster; $23)

ALTHOUGH Arnett has been working for CNN since 1981, he hasn't forgotten how to write for readers rather than viewers, and these memoirs are continuously absorbing, never cynical. As a teen-age cub reporter in New Zealand, the author was licked into shape by a slave-driving boss; he then started moving around the map as a footloose reporter in Australia, Thailand, Laos, and Indonesia, arriving at the A.P. bureau in Vietnam in 1962. There he learned combat reporting, winning both a Pulitzer Prize and the enmity of the Johnson Administration for the candor of his dispatches. Readers will remember that during the Gulf War he again became the center of controversy while a correspondent for the only American network allowed to remain in Baghdad. Arnett is no ideologue, but he does show how his approach to reporting—keep looking and write exactly what you see—evolved into a commitment to tell the truth, because the public deserves accurate information. This simple credo has made him a first-rate journalist.

Mark Morris

by Joan Acocella

(Farrar, Straus & Giroux; $27.50)

ON the surface, this handsomely produced volume is an informative account of the life and work of the thirty-seven-year-old choreographer: his youthful immersion in ballet, Balkan folk dance, and flamenco; his phenomenal early career in New York and the trajectory of his company's three-year residency in Brussels; his hundred and three dance works, set to music ranging from Handel to the Violent Femmes. But "Mark Morris" is also an excellent piece of general arts criticism. In her integrative approach Acocella mirrors her subject, whose achievement she sees as an expression of communal, humanist concerns as well as one of particular, sometimes paradoxical characteristics. Her understanding of the relationship between Morris's offstage gay persona and the erotic complexity of his work, for example, is remarkably free of cant. Acocella is aware of her subject's faults, but she defends his work vigorously against those who view it as musically overdetermined or merely camp. "People should enjoy camp while it lasts," she counsels. People should similarly relish the kind of no-nonsense thinking and subversive wit deployed in this book before those qualities vanish from critical discourse altogether.

Love from Nancy: The Letters of Nancy Mitford

edited by Charlotte Mosley

(Houghton Mifflin; $35)

IN addition to her novels and historical biographies, Mitford was a prolific writer of letters, and left more than eight thousand with her family and friends. Mosley has mercifully winnowed this mass down to about five hundred. But since Mitford, by her own admission, was addicted to chat, one must wade through a mountain of inconsequential small talk to discover her best sallies of wit. The roster of correspondents, besides her variously illustrious and infamous sisters, includes Evelyn Waugh, Cyril Connolly, and Anthony Powell, as well as assorted Guinnesses and Churchills. As she exclaims in a billet of general congratulation to John Betjeman, "How nice & clever we all are." But these are the allowable high spirits of a Bright Young Thing, and Mitford mellows with age. In her later life, which ended with a slow, painful cancer, her determined cheerfulness loses its bumptious-compulsive character and becomes an object of admiration. ♦

SHOUTS AND MURMURS

OUT OF STYLE

BY CALVIN TRILLIN

The Stamps, Coins and Camera columns have been discontinued.*—Notice in the* Times, *Sunday, January 2, 1994.*

JUST like that. Gone. Vaporized. It was as if they had never been there. A reader who had returned from a few weeks out of town might have assumed, as he leafed through the trendy new Styles section looking for tips on how to acquire the mannerisms of an in-the-know teen-ager, that the authors of three columns—"Stamps," "Coins," "Camera"—had fallen ill at once, struck down by some odd virus that affects only obsessive hobbyists.

According to an accompanying notice, "Chess" and "Bridge" will continue to appear on certain weekdays, but are no longer part of the Sunday paper. Apparently, the back pages of the Styles section will now be given over completely to weddings. It's as if those hip kids who run the weekly Friday-night Sock Hop had persuaded the principal that permitting the wonks of the Chess Team and the Stamp Club to hang around for meetings on the same evening just ruins everybody's fun.

As it happens, I have no interest in stamps, coins, cameras, chess, or bridge. My only hobby is reading the wedding announcements in the Sunday *Times*. Over the years, I've developed the same sort of skill in making small distinctions in the backgrounds of the bride and groom that stamp collectors make in various Luxembourg commemoratives. I know the pecking orders of schools and suburbs; I know which débutante balls can be bought into and which are authentically snotty; I know where the fissures run between and within ethnic groups. I long ago acknowledged the source of my interest: I enjoy contemplating the sort of tensions that are likely to come out at the reception. You think that's a mean-spirited basis for a hobby? There are coin collectors whose motives are not so pure, either.

Given my own interests, you might think the *Times* announcement would cause me to celebrate—to treat myself to some champagne and the kind of hors d'oeuvres you'd expect to find at the wedding of a Greek-American Columbia Law School graduate from Ozone Park to an interne whose B.A. is from Yeshiva. That might have been my response, in fact, if it hadn't been for my childhood friend Herbert.

For many years, Herbert has read the Sunday *Times* almost exclusively for its coverage of coins, stamps, and cameras. I say almost because if he had a little extra time on his hands it was his custom to peruse the chess and bridge columns as well. "Chess is still going to be in on Tuesdays," I said to Herbert shortly after reading the announcement. "You'll be able to catch the bridge column five days a week—just not on Sunday."

"Thanks," Herbert said, without enthusiasm. "It's nice of you to say so."

"Herbert," I said, "you can't take this personally. It's not as if the editors of the *Times* got together and decided that there's a certain sort of reader they don't want to have around on Sundays."

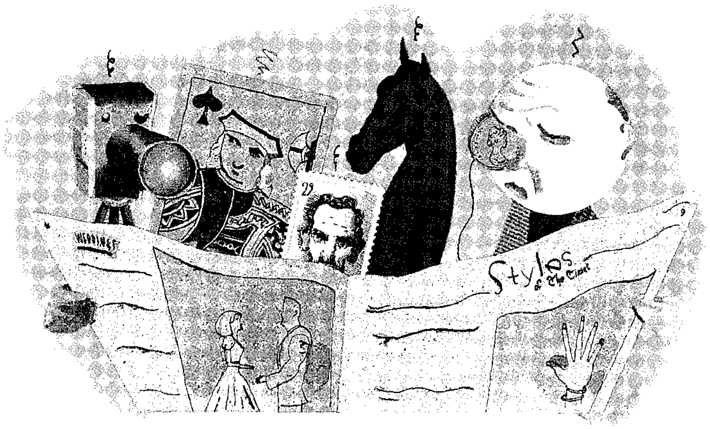
I felt I had to say that, because, frankly, Herbert has always had a little problem in the self-esteem department. Some of his friends think it dates back to the time when the principal asked the Chess Team and the Stamp Club to move their meetings to Thursday nights for some trumped-up reason that everybody knew was a cover for the distaste of the Friday Sock Hop crowd. Herbert was recording secretary of the Stamp Club that year.

"I guess there's no chance of my letter getting in now," Herbert said, referring to a letter he'd written to the stamps column about a Nicaraguan air-mail stamp he felt was underappreciated.

"Maybe the chess column would run it on a slow Tuesday," I said.

"No, it's gone," Herbert said.

He's right, of course. On Sunday mornings now, I can picture Herbert in his favorite armchair. The Styles section, featuring a front-page piece on whether the fashion of wearing navel rings has played itself out, lies unread at his feet. He's staring into space. With that picture in my mind, it's difficult for me to conjure up wedding receptions. I still read the announcements—actually, I've been looking for something that might pique Herbert's interest, such as the son of a noted coin collector hitching up with the associate editor of a stamp magazine—but often on Sunday mornings now I stare into space myself. ♦



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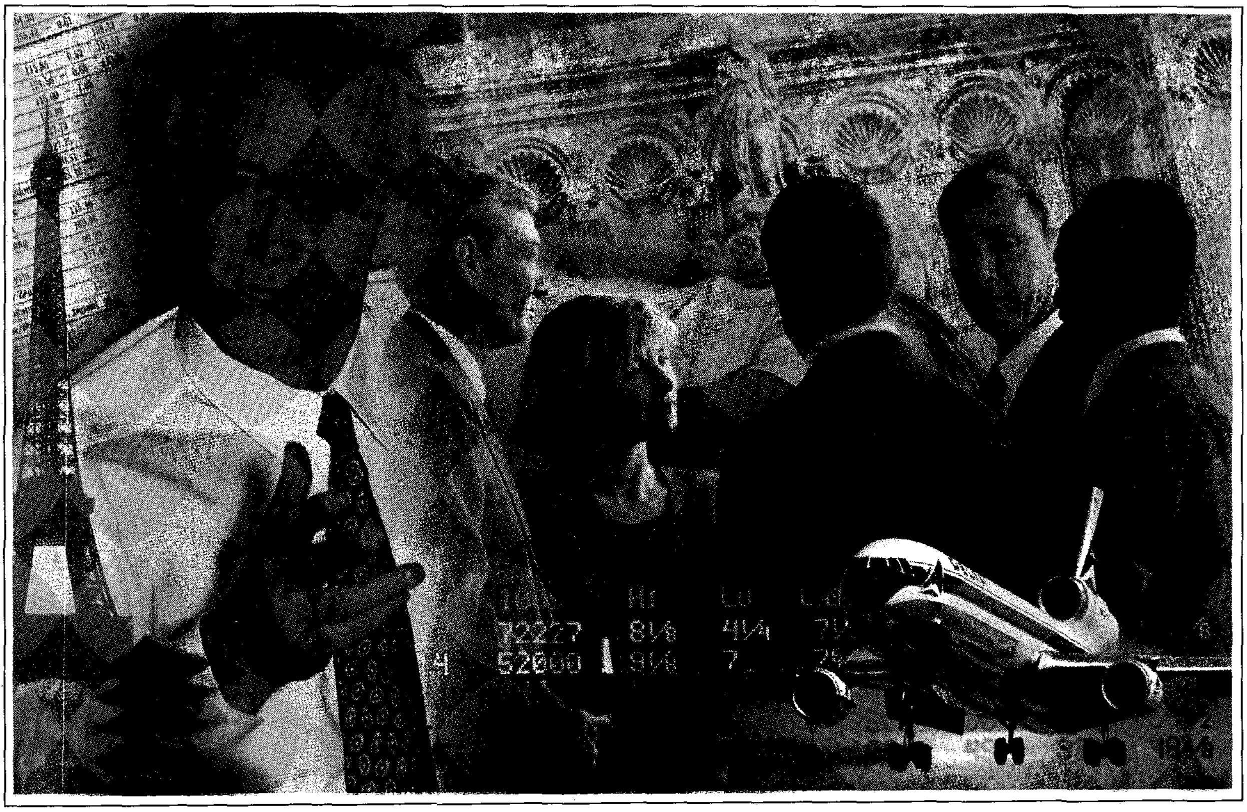

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